

CONQUEST OF SELF

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CONQUEST OF SELF

BY

M K GANDHI

(Being Gleanings from his Writings and Speeches)

VOL. II

COMPILED BY

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PART IV

WOMAN'S ROLE

I. EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN.

Socially men and women are inseparable members, supplying one another's deficiencies. Women are dubbed the 'weaker vessel', being physically weaker than men, but spiritually they are superior to them. Men are proud of their brute force, but women need not mind their inferiority in this real respect.—M. K. G.

I AM uncompromising in the matter of woman's rights. In my opinion she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality. As women begin to realise their strength, as they must in proportion to the education they receive, they will naturally resent the glaring inequalities to which they are subjected. But to remove legal inequalities will be a mere palliative. The root of the evil lies much deeper than most people realise. It lies in man's greed of power and fame and deeper still in mutual lust. Man has always desired power. Ownership of property gives this power. Man hankers also after posthumous fame based on power. This cannot be had, if property is progressively cut up in pieces, as it must be if all the posterity become equal co-sharers. Hence the descent of property for the most part on the eldest male issue. Most women are married. And they are co-sharers, inspite of the law being against them, in their husbands' power and privileges. They delight in being ladies this and what not simply for the fact of being the wives of particular lords. Though, therefore, they may vote for radical reform in academic discussions over inequalities, when it comes to acting up to their vote, they will be found to be unwilling to part with the privileges.

Whilst, therefore, I would always advocate the repeal of all legal disqualifications, I should have the

enlightened women of India to deal with the root cause. Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, and her advent to public life should, therefore, result in purifying it, in restraining unbridled ambition and accumulation of property. Let them know that millions of men have no property to transmit to posterity. Let us learn from them that it is better for the few to have no ancestral property at all. The real property that a parent can transmit to all equally is his or her character and educational facilities. Parents should seek to make their sons and daughters self-reliant, well able to earn an honest livelihood by the sweat of the brow. The upbringing of minor children will then naturally devolve upon the major descendant. Much of the present imbecility of the children of the wealthy will go, if the latter could but substitute the worthy ambition of educating their children to become independent for the unworthy ambition of making them slaves of ancestral property, which kills enterprise and feeds the passions which accompany idleness and luxury. The privilege of the awakened women should be to spot and eradicate age-long evils.

That mutual lust too has played an important part in bringing about the disqualifications of the fair sex hardly needs any demonstration. Woman has circumvented man in a variety of ways in her unconsciously subtle ways, as man has vainly and equally unconsciously struggled to thwart woman in gaining ascendancy over him. The result is a stalemate. Thus viewed, it is a serious problem the enlightened daughters of *Bharat Mata* are called upon to solve. They may not ape the manner of the West which may be suited to its environment. They must apply methods suited to the Indian genius and Indian environment. Theirs must be the strong controlling, purifying, steadying hand, conserving what is best in our culture and unhesitatingly rejecting what is base and degrading. This is the work of Sitas, Draupadis, Savitris and Damayantis, not of amazons and prudes.—Y. I. 17-10-29.

Queen of the Household

I do not envisage the wife, as a rule, following an avocation independently of her husband. The care of the children, and the upkeep of the household are quite enough to fully engage all her energy.

In a well-ordered family the additional burden of maintaining the family ought not to fall on her. The man should look to the maintenance of the family, the woman to household management; the two thus supplementing and complementing each other's labours.

Nor do I see in this any invasion of woman's rights or suppression of her freedom. The saying attributed to Manu that "for woman there can be no freedom" is not to me sacrosanct. It only shows that probably, at the time when it was promulgated, women were kept in a stage of subjection. The epithets used in our literature to describe a wife are *Ardhangana*, 'the better half', and *Sahadharmini*, 'the helpmate'. The husband addressing the wife as *devi* or goddess does not show any disparagement. But, unfortunately, a time came when the woman was divested of many of her rights and privileges and was reduced to a status of inferiority. But there could be no depreciation of her *varna*. For, *varna* does not connote a set of rights or privileges; it prescribes duties or obligations only. And no one can divest us of our duty, unless we ourselves choose to shirk it. The woman who knows and fulfils her duty realises her dignified status. She is the queen, not the slave, of the household over which she presides —H 12-10-1934.

* * *

Economic Independence of Women

Q—Some people oppose a modification of laws relating to the right of married women to own property on the ground that economic independence of woman would lead to the spread of immorality among women and disruption of domestic life. What is your attitude on the question?

A.—I would answer the question by a counter question. Has not independence of man and his holding

property led to the spread of immorality among men? If you answer 'yes', then let it be so also with women. And when women have rights of ownership and the rest like men, it would be found that the enjoyment of such rights is not responsible for their vices or their virtues. Morality which depends upon the helplessness of a man or woman has not much to recommend it. Morality is rooted in the purity of our hearts.

—H. 8-6-1940.

II. FOR WOMEN REFORMERS

It is a sin to bring forth unwanted children, but I think it is a greater sin to avoid the consequences of one's own action.—M. K G.

FROM a serious discussion I had with a sister I fear that my position on the use of contraceptives has not yet been sufficiently understood. My opposition is not due to their having come to us from the West. I thankfully use some Western things when I know that they benefit us as they benefit those in the West. My opposition to contraceptives is based on merits.

I take it that the wisest among the protagonists of contraceptives restrict their use to married women who desire to satisfy their and their husband's sexual appetite without wanting children. I hold this desire as unnatural in the human species and its satisfaction detrimental to the spiritual progress of the human family. As against this is often cited the following testimony among others of Lord Dawson of Penn:

"Sex love is one of the clamant, dominating forces of the world. Here we have an instinct, so fundamental, so imperious that its influence is a fact which has to be accepted: suppress it you cannot. You may guide it into healthy channels, but an outlet it will have, and if that outlet is inadequate or unduly obstructed, irregular channels will be forced. Self-control has a breaking point, and if in any community marriage is difficult or late of attainment, an increase of irregular unions will inevitably result. All are

agreed that union of body should be in association with union of mind and soul; all are agreed that the rearing of children is a pre-eminent purpose. Has not sexual union over and over again been the physical expression of our love without thought or intention of procreation? Have we all been wrong? Or is it that the Church lacks that vital contact with the realities of life which accounts for the gulf between her and the people? Authority, and I include under authority the churches, will never gain the allegiance of the young unless their attitude is more frank, more courageous, and more in accordance with realities.

Sex love has, apart from parenthood, a purport of its own. It is an essential part of health and happiness in marriage. If sexual union is a gift from God, it is worth learning how to use it. Within its own sphere it should be cultivated so as to bring physical satisfaction to both, not merely to one. The attainment of mutual and reciprocal joy in their relations constitutes a firm bond between two people and makes for durability of their marriage tie. More marriages fail from inadequate and clumsy sex love than from too much sex love. Passion is a worthy possession; most men who are any good are capable of passion. Sex love without passion is a poor lifeless thing. Sensuality on the other hand is on a level with gluttony, a physical excess. Now that the revision of the Prayer Book is receiving consideration, I should like to suggest, with great respect, that an addition be made to the objects of marriage in the Marriage Service in these terms. 'The complete realisation of the love of this man and this woman, the one for the other.'

I will pass on to consider the all-important question of birth control. Birth control is here to stay. It is an established fact, and for good or evil has to be accepted. No denunciations will abolish it. The reasons which lead parents to limit their offspring are sometimes selfish, but more often honourable and cogent. The desire to marry and to rear children

well equipped for life's struggle, limited incomes, the cost of living, burdensome taxation, are forcible motives; and, further, amongst the educated classes there is the desire of women to take part in life and their husbands' careers which is incompatible with oft-recurring pregnancies. Absence of birth control means late marriages, and these carry with them irregular unions and all the baneful consequences. It is idle to decry illicit intercourse and interpose obstacles to marriage at one and the same time. But say many, 'Birth control may be necessary, but the only birth control which is justifiable is voluntary abstention.' Such abstention would be either ineffective or, if effective, impracticable and harmful to health and happiness. To limit the size of a family to, say, four children, would be to impose on a married couple an amount of abstention which for long periods would almost be equivalent to celibacy, and when one remembers that owing to economic reasons the abstention would have to be most strict during the earlier years of marriage life when desires are strongest, I maintain a demand is being made which, for the mass of people, it is impossible to meet; that the endeavours to meet it would impose a strain hostile to health and happiness and carry with them grave dangers to morals. The thing is preposterous. You might as well put water by the side of a man suffering from thirst and tell him not to drink it. No, birth control by abstention is either ineffective, or, if effective, is pernicious.

It is said to be unnatural and intrinsically immoral. Civilisation involves the chaining of natural forces and their conversion to man's will and uses. When anaesthetics were first used at child-birth there was an outcry that their use was unnatural and wicked, because God meant woman to suffer. It is no more unnatural to control child-birth by artificial means. The use of birth control is good, its abuse bad. May I end by an appeal that the Church approach this question, in common with certain others, in the light

of modern knowledge and the needs of a new world, and unhampered by traditions which have outworn their usefulness?"

Lord Dawson's eminence is not to be denied. But with all due respect to his greatness as a physician, I am tempted to question the value of his evidence, specially when it is pitted against the experience of men and women who have lived a life of continence without suffering any moral or physical harm. Physicians generally come across those who have so defied laws of health that they have contracted some illness. They, therefore, often successfully prescribe what sufferers should do to become well, but they cannot always know what healthy men and women can do in any particular direction. Lord Dawson's evidence, therefore, about the effect of continence on married people has to be taken with the greatest caution. No doubt the tendency among married people is to regard sexual satisfaction for itself as legitimate. But in the modern age in which nothing is taken for granted and everything is rightly scrutinized, it is surely wrong to take it for granted that, because we have hitherto indulged in the sexual appetite in married life, the practice is either legitimate or healthy. Many old practices have been discontinued with good results. Why should this particular practice be exempt from examination, especially in the light of the experience of those who even as married men and women are living a life of restraint with mutual benefit both physical and moral?

But I object to contraceptives also on special grounds in India. Young men in India do not know what sexual restraint is. It is not their fault. They are married early. It is the custom. Nobody tells them to exercise restraint in married life. Parents are impatient to see grandchildren. The poor girl wives are expected by their surroundings to bear children as fast as they can. In such surroundings, the use of contraceptives can only further aggravate the mischief. The poor girls who are expected to submit to their husbands' desires are now to be taught that it is a good

thing to desire sexual satisfaction without the desire to have children. And in order to fulfil the double purpose they are to have recourse to contraceptives!!!

I regard this to be the most pernicious education for married women. I do not believe that woman is prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man. It is easier for her than for man to exercise self-restraint. I hold that the right education in this country is to teach woman the art of saying no even to her husband, to teach her that it is no part of her duty to become a mere tool or a doll in her husband's hands. She has rights as well as duties. Those who see in Sita a willing slave under Rama do not realise the loftiness of either her independence or Rama's consideration for her in everything. Sita was no helpless weak woman incapable of protecting herself or her honour. To ask India's women to take to contraceptives is, to say the least, putting the cart before the horse. The first thing is to free her from mental slavery, to teach her the sacredness of her body, and to teach her the dignity of national service and the service of humanity. It is not fair to assume that India's women are beyond redemption, and that they have therefore to be simply taught the use of contraceptives for the sake of preventing births and preserving such health as they may be in possession of.

Let not the sisters who are rightly indignant over the miseries of women who are called upon to bear children whether they will or no, be impatient. Not even the propaganda in favour of contraceptives is going to promote the desired end overnight. Every method is a matter of education. My plea is for the right type —H. 2-5-1936.

III. WOMAN'S MISSION

If I was born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretention on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything.—M. K. G.

WOMEN have got to come up to the level of man. They may not copy man in all the wildness of his nature; but they must come to the level of man in all that is best in him.—Y. I. 1-12-1927.

* * *

Hindu culture has erred on the side of excessive subordination of the wife to the husband, and has insisted on the complete merging of the wife in the husband. This has resulted in the husband sometimes usurping and exercising authority that reduces him to the level of the brute. The remedy for such excesses, therefore, lies not through the law but through the true education of women as distinguished from unmarried girls, and through cultivating public opinion against unmanly conduct on the part of husbands. —Y. I. 3-10-1929

* * *

To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than women?—Y. I. 10-4-1930.

* * *

Had not man in his blind selfishness crushed woman's soul as he has done or had she not succumbed to 'the enjoyments', she would have given the world an exhibition of the infinite strength that is latent in her. The world shall see it in all its wonder and glory when woman has secured an equal opportunity for

herself with man and fully developed her powers of mutual aid and combination.—Y. I. 7-5-1931.

* * *

Women are special custodians of all that is pure and religious in life. Conservative by nature, if they are slow to shed superstitious habits, they are also slow to give up all that is pure and noble in life.—H. 25-3-1933.

* * *

I do believe that it is woman's mission to exhibit *Ahimsa* at its highest and best . . . For woman is more fitted than man to make explorations and take bolder action in *Ahimsa* . . . For the courage of self-sacrifice woman is anyday superior to man, as I believe man is to woman for the courage of the brute.—H. 5-11-1938.

* * *

Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and therefore non-violence. Her occupations must therefore be, as they are, more conducive to peace than war. That she is now being dragged down for purposes of violent war is no credit to modern civilisation. I have no doubt that violence so ill becomes woman that presently she will rebel against the violation of her fundamental nature. I feel that man too will repent of his folly. Equality of the sexes does not mean equality of occupations. There may be no legal bar against a woman hunting or wielding a lance. But she instinctively recoils from a function that belongs to man. Nature has created sexes as complements of each other. Their functions are defined as are their forms.—H. 2-12-1939.

IV. REGENERATION OF WOMEN

I believe in the proper education of women. But I do believe that woman will not make her contribution to the world by mimicking or running a race with men. She can run the race, but she will not rise to the great heights she is capable of by mimicking man. She has to be the complement of man.—M. K. G.

[I]t is necessary to understand what we mean when we talk of the regeneration of women. It presupposes

legeneration, and if that is so, we should further consider what led to it and how. It is our primary duty to have some very hard thinking on these points. In travelling all over India, I have come to realise that all the existing agitation is confined to an infinitesimal section of our people, who are really a mere speck in the vast firmament. Crores of people of both sexes live in absolute ignorance of this agitation. Full eighty-five per cent of the people of this country pass their innocent days in a state of total detachment from what is going on around them. These men and women, ignorant as they are, do their bit in life well and properly. Both have the same education or rather the absence of education. Both are helping each other, as they ought to do. If their lives are in any sense incomplete, the cause can be traced to the incompleteness of the lives of the remaining fifteen per cent.

In the observations that I am going to make, I will confine myself to the fifteen per cent above mentioned, and even then it would be out of place to discuss the disabilities that are common to both men and women. The point for us to consider is the regeneration of our women relatively to our men. Legislation has been mostly the handiwork of men; and man has not always been fair and discriminate in performing that self-appointed task. The largest part of our effort, in promoting the regeneration of women, should be directed towards removing those blemishes which are represented in our Shastras as the necessary and ingrained characteristics of women. Who will attempt this and how? In my humble opinion, in order to make the attempt, we will have to produce women pure, firm and self-controlled as Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi. If we do produce them, such modern sisters will receive the same homage from Hindu society as is being paid to their prototypes of yore. Their words will have the same authority as the Shastras. We will feel ashamed of the stray reflections on them in our Smritis, and will soon forget them. Such revolutions have occurred in Hinduism in the past, and will still take place in the

future, leading to the stability of our faith.

We have now discussed the root-cause of degeneration of our women, and have considered the ideals by the realisation of which the present conditions of our women can be improved. The number of women who can realise those ideals will be necessarily very few, and, therefore, we will now consider what ordinary women can accomplish if they would try. Their first attempt should be directed towards awakening in the minds of as many women as possible a proper sense of their present condition. I am not among those who believe that such an effort can be made through literary education only. To work on that basis would be to postpone indefinitely the accomplishment of our aims; I have experienced at every step that it is not at all necessary to wait so long. We can bring home to our women the sad realities of their present condition without, in the first instance, giving them any literary education.

Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in every minutest detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things and not as a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Many of our movements stop half way because of the condition of our women. Much of our work done does not yield appropriate results; our lot is like that of the penny wise and pound foolish trader who does not employ enough capital in his business.

But, although much good and useful work can be done without a knowledge of reading and writing, yet it is my firm belief that you cannot always do without a knowledge thereof. It develops and sharpens one's intellect and it stimulates our power of doing good. I

have never placed an unnecessarily high value on the knowledge of reading and writing. I am only attempting to assign its proper place to it. I have pointed out from time to time that there is no justification for men to deprive women or to deny them equal rights on the grounds of their illiteracy; but education is essential for enabling women to uphold these natural rights, to improve them and to spread them, again, the true knowledge of self is unattainable by the millions who are without such education. Many a book is full of innocent pleasure and this will be denied to us without education. It is no exaggeration to say that a human being without education is not far removed from an animal. Education, therefore, is necessary for women as it is for men. Not that the methods of education should be identical in both cases. In the first place, our State system of education is full of error and productive of harm in many respects. It should be eschewed by men and women alike. Even if it were free from its present blemishes, I would not regard it as proper for women from all points of view. Man and woman are of equal rank but they are not identical. They are a peerless pair being supplementary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived, and, therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both. In framing any scheme of women's education this cardinal truth must be constantly kept in mind. Man is supreme in the outward activities of a married pair and, therefore, it is in the fitness of things that he should have a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand, home life is entirely the sphere of woman and, therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge. Not that knowledge should be divided into watertight compartments, or that some branches of knowledge should be closed to any one, but unless courses of instruction are based on a discriminating appreciation.

of these basic principles, the fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed.

I have come to the conclusion that in the ordinary course of our lives neither our men nor our women need necessarily have any knowledge of English. True, English is necessary for making a living and for active association in our political movements. I do not believe in women working for a living or undertaking commercial enterprises. The few women who may require or desire to have English education, can very easily have their way by joining the schools for men. To introduce English education in schools meant for women could only lead to prolong our helplessness. I have often read and heard people saying that the rich treasures of English literature should be opened alike to men and women. I submit in all humility that there is some misapprehension in assuming such an attitude. No one intends to close these treasures against women while keeping them open for men.

There is none on earth able to prevent you from studying the literature of the whole world if you are fond of literary tastes. But when courses of education have been framed with the needs of a particular society in view, you cannot supply the requirements of the few who have cultivated a literary taste. In asking our men and women to spend less time in the study of English than they are doing now, my object is not to deprive them of the pleasure which they are likely to derive from it, but I hold that the same pleasure can be obtained at less cost and trouble if we follow a more natural method. The world is full of many a gem of priceless beauty, but then these gems are not all of English setting. Other languages can well boast of productions of similar excellence; all these should be made available for our common people and that can only be done if our own learned men will undertake to translate them for us in our own languages.

Merely to have outlined a scheme of education as above is not to have removed the bane of child marriage from our society or to have conferred on our

women an equality of rights Let us now consider the case of our girls who disappear, so to say, from view after marriage. They are not likely to return to our schools. Conscious of the unspeakable and unthinkable sin of the child marriage of their daughters, their mothers cannot think of educating them or of otherwise making their dry life a cheerful one. The man who marries a young girl, does not do so out of any altruistic motives but through sheer lust. Who is to rescue these girls? A proper answer to this question will also be a solution of the woman's problem. The answer is albeit difficult, but it is only one. There is, of course, none to champion her cause but her husband. It is useless to expect a child-wife to be able to bring round the man who has married her. The difficult work must, therefore, for the present at least be left to man. If I could, I would take a census of child-wives and will find the friends, as well as through moral and polite exhortations I will attempt to bring home to them the enormity of their crime, in linking their fortunes with child-wives and will warn them that there is no expiation for that sin unless and until they have by education made their wives fit, not only to bear children but also to bring them up properly and unless in the meantime they live a life of absolute celibacy—S. & W, p 424

V WHAT IS WOMAN'S ROLE?

Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, and her advent to public life should therefore result in purifying it, in restraining unbridled ambition and accumulation of property.—M K. G.

(COMMENTING on a lengthy communication from 'a highly educated sister', who opined that the fair sex required treatment different from men, Gandhiji wrote as follows).

The writer of the letter is of opinion that the fair sex requires treatment different from men. If it is so, I do not think any man will find the correct solution. No matter how much he tries, he must fail because

nature has made him different from woman. Only the toad under the harrow knows where it pinches him. Therefore ultimately woman will have to determine with authority what she needs. My own opinion is that, just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help.

But somehow or other man has dominated woman from ages past, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man's interested teaching that she is inferior to him. But the seers among men have recognised her equal status.

Nevertheless there is no doubt that at some point there is bifurcation. Whilst both are fundamentally one, it is also equally true that in the form there is a vital difference between the two. Hence the vocations of the two must also be different. The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially mistress of the house. He is the bread-winner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the care-taker in every sense of the term. The art of bringing up the infants of the race is her special and sole prerogative. Without her care the race must become extinct.

In my opinion it is degrading both for man and woman that woman should be called upon or induced to forsake the hearth and shoulder the rifle for the protection of that hearth. It is a reversion to barbarity and the beginning of the end. In trying to ride the horse that man rides, she brings herself and him down. The sin will be on man's head for tempting or compelling his companion to desert her special calling. There is as much bravery in keeping one's home in good order and condition as there is in defending it against attack from without.

As I have watched millions of peasants in their natural surroundings and as I watch them daily in little Segaoon, the natural division of spheres of work has forced itself on my attention. There are no women blacksmiths and carpenters. But men and women work on the fields, the heaviest work being done by the males. The women keep and manage the homes. They supplement the meagre resources of the family, but man remains the main bread-winner.

The division of the spheres of work being recognised, the general qualities and culture required are practically the same for both the sexes.

My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and ahimsa in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex. If she is able to do this successfully, she must resolutely refuse to believe in the modern teaching that everything is determined and regulated by the sex impulse. I fear I have put the proposition rather clumsily. But I hope my meaning is clear. I do not know that the millions of men who are taking an active part in the war are obsessed by the sex spectre. Nor are the peasants working together in their fields worried or dominated by it. This is not to say or suggest that they are free from the instinct implanted in man and woman. But it most certainly does not dominate their lives as it seems to dominate the lives of those who are saturated with the modern sex literature. Neither man nor woman has time for such things when he or she is faced with the hard fact of living life in its grim reality.

I have suggested in these columns that woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering

caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar. She can become the leader in Satyagraha which does not require the learning that books give but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith.

My good nurse in the Sassoon Hospital, Poona, as I was lying on a sick bed years ago, told me the story of a woman who refused to take chloroform because she would not risk the life of the babe she was carrying. She had to undergo a painful operation. The only anæsthetic she had was her love for the babe, to save whom no suffering was too great. Let not women, who can count many such heroines among them, ever despise their fair sex or deplore that they were not born men. The contemplation of that heroine often makes me envy woman the status that is hers, if she only knew. There is as much reason for man to wish that he was born a woman as for woman to do otherwise. But the wish is fruitless. Let us be happy in the state to which we are born and do the duty for which nature has destined us.—H. 24-2-1940.

VI. WRONG APOTHEOSIS OF WOMEN

Before you put your pens to paper, think of woman as your own mother, and I assure you the chastest literature will flow from your pens, even like the beautiful rain from heaven which waters the thirsty earth below.—M. K. G.

(THE occasion was a letter addressed to him by the ladies in charge of a women's movement called Jyoti Sangh. The letter enclosed copy of a resolution they had passed condemning the present-day tendencies in literature regarding the presentation of women.

There was, Gandhiji felt, considerable force in the complaint, and he said):

The gravamen of their charge is that the present-day writers give an entirely false picture of women. They are exasperated at the sickly sentimentality with which you delineate them, at the vulgar way in which you dwell on their physical form. Does all their beauty and their strength lie in their physical form, in their capacity to please the lustful eye of men? Why, the writers of the letter justly ask, should we be eternally represented as meek submissive women for whom all the menial jobs of the household are reserved, and whose only deities are their husbands? Why are they not delineated as they really are? We are, they say, neither ethereal damsels, nor dolls, nor bundles of passions and nerves. We are as much human beings as men are, and we are filled with the same urge for freedom. I claim to know them and their minds sufficiently well. There was a time in South Africa when I was surrounded by numerous women, all their men-folk having gone to jails. There were some sixty inmates and I had become the brother and father of all the girls and women. Let me tell you that they grew in strength and spirit under me, so much so that they ultimately marched to jails themselves.

I am told that our literature is full of even an exaggerated apotheosis of women. Let me say that it is an altogether wrong apotheosis. Let me place one simple test before you. In what light do you think of them when you proceed to write about them? I suggest that before you put your pens to paper, think of woman as your own mother, and I assure you the chastest literature will flow from your pens even like the beautiful rain from heaven which waters the thirsty earth below. Remember that a woman was your mother before a woman became your wife. Far from quenching their spiritual thirst some writers stimulate their passions, so much so that poor ignorant women waste their time wondering how they might answer to the description our fiction gives of them. Are detailed descriptions

of their physical form an essential part of literature, I wonder? Do you find anything of the kind in the Upanishads, the Quran or the Bible? And yet do you know that the English language would be empty without the Bible? Three parts Bible and one part Shakespeare is the description of it. Arabic would be forgotten without the Quran. And think of Hindi without Tulsidas! Do you find in it anything like what you find in present-day literature about women?

—H. 21-11-1936.

VII. CHILD-WIVES AND CHILD-WIDOWS

If marriage is, as it ought to be, a sacrament, an entrance into a new life, the girls to be married should be fully developed, should have some hand in the choice of companions for life, and should know the consequences of their acts. It is a crime against God and man to call the union of children a married state and then to decree widowhood for a girl whose so-called husband is dead.

—M. K. G.

I AM strongly in favour of raising the age of consent not merely to 14, but even to 16... I heartily endorse any movement whose object is to save innocent girls of tender age from man's lust. A so-called marriage rite ought no longer to confer legality upon an immoral and inhuman act, which consummation even at the age of 14, in my humble opinion, undoubtedly is. Sanskrit texts of doubtful authority cannot be invoked to sanctify a practice which is in itself immoral. I have witnessed the ruin of the health of many a child-mother, and when to the horrors of an early marriage is added enforced early widowhood, human tragedy becomes complete. Any sensible legislation in the direction of raising the age of consent will certainly have my approval. But I am painfully conscious of the fact that even the existing legislation has proved abortive for want of public opinion to support it. The task of the reformer in this as in many other directions is most difficult. Constant and continuous agitation is necessary,

if any real impression is to be made on the Hindu public. I wish every success to those who are engaged in the noble task of rescuing Indian girls from premature old age and early death, and Hinduism from being responsible for bringing into being rickety weaklings.—Y. I. 27-8-1925.

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It is irreligion, not religion, to give religious sanction to a brutal custom. The *Smritis* bristle with contradictions. The only reasonable deduction to be drawn from the contradictions is that the texts that may be contrary to known and accepted morality, more especially to the moral precepts enjoined in the *Smritis* themselves, must be rejected as interpolations. Inspiring verses on self-restraint could not be written at the same time and by the same pen that wrote the verses encouraging the brute in man. Only a man innocent of self-restraint and steeped in vice could call it a sin not to marry a girl before she reached the age of monthly periods. It should be held sinful to marry a girl for several years after the periods begin. There cannot be even the thought of marriage before the periods begin. A girl is no more fit to bear children on beginning the periods than a lad is to procreate as soon as he grows the first hair on his upper lip.

This custom of child marriage is both a moral as well as a physical evil. For it undermines our morals and induces physical degeneration. By countenancing such customs we recede from God as well as Swaraj. A man who has no thought of the tender age of a girl has none of God. And undergrown men have no capacity for fighting battles of freedom or, having gained it, of retaining it. Fight for Swaraj means not mere political awakening but an all-round awakening—social, educational, economic and political.

Legislation is being promoted to raise the age of consent. It may be good for bringing a minority to book. But it is not legislation that will cure a popular evil, it is enlightened public opinion that can do it. I am not opposed to legislation in such matters, but I

do lay greater stress on the cultivation of public opinion... Ordinarily a girl under 18 years should never be given in marriage.—Y. I. 26-8-1926.

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No doubt man is primarily responsible for this state of things. But may women always throw the blame on men and salve their consciences? Do the enlightened among them not owe to their sex, as also to men whose mothers they are, to take up the burden of reform? What is all the education worth that they are receiving, if on marriage they are to become mere dolls for their husbands and prematurely engaged in the task of rearing would-be manikins? They may fight, if they like, for votes for women. It costs neither time nor trouble. But where are the brave women who would work among the girl wives and girl widows, and who would take no rest and leave none for men, till girl marriages become an impossibility, and till every girl feels in herself strength enough to refuse to be married except when she is of full age and to the person about whom she is given the final choice? —Y. I. 7-10-1926.

Voluntary Widowhood

Voluntary widowhood is a priceless boon in Hinduism; enforced widowhood is a curse. And I very much feel that many young widows, if they were absolutely free, not so much from the fear of physical restraint as from the opprobrium of Hindu public opinion, would remarry without the slightest hesitation.

All the young widows, therefore, should have every inducement given to them to remarry and should be sure that no blame would be attached to them if they chose to remarry. This is not work that can be done by any institution. This work has got to be done by individual reformers.—H. 22-6-1935.

VIII. WIDOW-REMARRIAGE

Widow-remarriage is no sin—if it be, it is as much a sin as the marriage of a widower is. All widowhood is not holy. It is an adornment to her who can observe it.—M. K. G.

REMARRIAGE of widows is necessary to a certain extent. The reform can be brought about only when our youths have purified themselves. Are they pure? Do they profit by their education? Or why blame their education? From childhood up a slave-mentality is sedulously cultivated in us. And if we cannot think freely how can we act freely? We are alike slaves of the caste, of a foreign education, and of an alien Government. Every one of the facilities provided us have become our fetters. There are so many educated youths amongst us. How few of them have thought of the lot of the widows in their own homes? How few have resisted the temptation of lucre? How few regard them as their own sisters and mothers and protect their honour? How few have had the courage of their convictions and defied their castes to do their worst? Whom is the poor widow to approach? . . . I would appeal to everyone who has a child widow under his care to consider it his duty to marry her.—Y. I. 4-2-1926.

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Enforced Widowhood

To force widowhood upon little girls is a brutal crime for which we Hindus are daily paying dearly . . . Voluntary widowhood consciously adopted by a woman who has felt the affection of a partner adds grace and dignity to life, sanctifies the home and uplifts religion itself. Widowhood imposed by religion or custom is an unbearable yoke and defiles the home by secret vice and degrades religion . . . If we would be pure, if we would save Hinduism, we must rid ourselves of this poison of enforced widowhood. The reform must begin by those who have girl widows taking courage in both their hands and seeing that the child widows in

their charge are duly and well married—not remarried. They were never really married.—Y. I. 5-8-1926.

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The suggestion that young widows will take up all young men and leave none for unmarried girls betrays a woeful want of sense of proportion. The excessive anxiety for the chastity of young girls betrays an unhealthy mind. The limited number of widows remarrying can never leave a large number of young girls unmarried. And in any event, if ever such a problem arose it would be found to be due to the early marriages that take place today. The remedy in anticipation is to prevent early marriages.

Of the love, the sanctity of *grihastha* life, etc., where there is widow of tender age, the less said the better . . . I have never advocated widow remarriage on a wholesale scale. . .

These poor, wretched beings ('widows upto 15 years only') know nothing of *Pativrata* dharma. They are strangers to love. The truer statement would be to say that these girls were never married at all.

If marriage is, as it ought to be, a sacrament, an entrance into a new life, the girls to be married should be fully developed, should have some hand in the choice of companions for life, and should know the consequences of their acts.

It is a crime against God and man to call the union of the children a married state and then to decree widowhood for a girl whose so-called husband is dead.

I do believe that a real Hindu widow is a treasure. She is one of the gifts of Hinduism to humanity. . . But the existence of girl widows is a blot upon Hinduism—Y. I. 19-8-1926.

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The sacredness of the institution can be preserved only when it is purged of the curse of child widowhood. The statement that the widows attain *Moksha* if they observe *Brahmacharya* has no foundation whatsoever in experience. More things are necessary than mere *Brahmacharya* for the attainment of the final bliss. And

Brahmacharya that is superimposed carries no merit with it, and often gives rise to secret vice that saps the morals of the society in which that vice exists

Whilst there is and very properly, glorification of real widowhood in Hinduism, there is, so far as I am aware, no warrant for the belief that in the Vedic times there was any absolute ban upon remarriage of widows. But my crusade is not against real widowhood. It is against its atrocious caricature.

The better way is not to regard as widows at all the girls I have in view and whom every Hindu who has a spark of chivalry in him is bound to relieve from their intolerable yoke. I therefore humbly but emphatically repeat the advice to every young Hindu to refuse to marry any but these maidens miscalled widows.—Y. I. 6-10-1927.

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If a young man of 18 being widowed could remarry, why should not a widow of that age have the same right? Voluntary enlightened widowhood is a great asset for any nation, as enforced ignorant widowhood is a disgrace.

Hindu society must make the way absolutely open for such widows to remarry whenever they like. The curse of every widow who is burning within to remarry but dare not for fear of a cruel custom descends upon Hindu society so long as it keeps the widow under an unforgivable bondage.—Y. I. 2-5-1929.

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Duty of Parents

No outside imposition can cure Hindu society of the enforced widowhood of girls who don't even know what marriage is. The reform can come first by the force of enlightened public opinion among Hindus, secondly by parents recognizing the duty of marrying their girl widows. This they can do, where the girls' consent is lacking, by educating their minds to the correctness of their marrying. Naturally this refers to girls under age. Where the so-called widows have grown to maturity and they do not desire to marry, nothing is necessary save to tell them that they are free to

marry precisely as if they were maidens unmarried. It is difficult to break the chains of prisoners who hug them, mistaking them as ornaments, as girls and even grown up women do regard their silver or golden chains and rings as ornaments—H. 20-3-1937.

IX. SATI

Satihood is the acme of purity. This purity cannot be attained or realised by dying. It can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of the spirit from day to day.—M. K. G.

SELF-IMMOLATION at the death of the husband is not a sign of enlightenment but of gross ignorance as to the nature of the soul. The soul is immortal, unchangeable and immanent.

It does not perish with the physical body but journeys on from one mortal frame to another till it completely emancipates itself from earthly bondage. The truth of it has been attested to by the experience of countless sages and seers and can be realised by any one who may wish to even today. How can 'suicide be then justified in the light of these facts?

Again, true marriage means not merely union of bodies. It connotes the union of the souls too. If marriage meant no more than a physical relationship the bereaved wife should be satisfied with a portrait or a waxen image of her husband. But self-destruction is worse. It cannot help to restore the dead to life, on the contrary it only takes away one more from the world of the living.

The ideal that marriage aims at is that of spiritual union through the physical. The human love that it incarnates is intended to serve as a stepping-stone to the divine or universal love. That is why immortal Mira sang:

"God alone is my husband—none else."

It follows from this that a Sati would regard marriage not as a means of satisfying the animal appetite but as a means of realising the ideal of selfless and self-effacing

service by completely merging her individuality in the husband's.

She would protect her Satihood not by mounting the funeral pyre at her husband's death but she would prove it with every breath that she breathes from the moment that she plighted her troth to him at the *Saptapadi* ceremony, by her renunciation, sacrifice, self-abnegation and dedication to the service of her husband, his family and the country.

She would shun creature comforts and delights of the senses. She would refuse to be enslaved by the narrow domestic cares and interests of the family, but would utilise every opportunity to add to her stock of knowledge and increase her capacity for service by more and more cultivating renunciation and self-discipline and by completely identifying herself with her husband, learn to identify herself with the whole world.

Such a Sati would refuse to give way to wild grief at the death of her husband but would ever strive to make her late husband's ideals and virtues live again in her actions and thereby win for him the crown of immortality. Knowing that the soul of him whom she married is not dead but still lives she will never think of remarrying.

In our present day Hindu society, marriage in a vast majority of cases, is not a matter of choice. Again, there are some who believe that in our ramshackle age marriage is necessary as a shield to virtue and as an aid to self-restraint.

And as a matter of fact, I personally know several instances of persons who, though at the time of the marriage were not free from animal passion, later on became imbued with the ideal of absolute chastity and found in their married life a powerful means for realising their ideal.

I have cited these instances to show that the ideal of Sati that I have depicted is not merely a counsel of perfection that has no place outside the world of theory, but something that has to be lived up to and

realised in this very matter of fact world of ours.

But I readily concede that the average wife who strives to attain the ideal of Satī will be a mother too. She must therefore add to her various other qualities mentioned above a knowledge of rearing and bringing up children so that they might live to be true servants of their country.

All that I have said about the wife applies equally to the husband. If the wife has to prove her loyalty and undivided devotion to her husband, so has the husband to prove his allegiance and devotion to his wife. You cannot have one set of weights and measures for the one and a different one for the other.

Yet we have never heard of a husband mounting the funeral pyre of his deceased wife. It may therefore be taken for granted that the practice of the widow immolating herself at the death of her husband had its origin in superstitious ignorance and the blind egotism of man.

Even if it could be proved that at one time the practice had a meaning, it can only be regarded as barbarous in the present age. The wife is not the slave of the husband but his comrade, otherwise known as his better half, his colleague and friend. She is a co-sharer with him of equal rights and of equal duties. Their obligations towards each other and towards the world must, therefore, be the same and reciprocal.

Satīhood is the acme of purity. This purity cannot be attained or realised by dying. It can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of the spirit from day to day.

—Y. I. 21-5-1931.

X. OUR FALLEN SISTERS

My heart goes out to the fallen sisters. They are driven to a life of shame. I am satisfied that they do not go to it from choice. And the beast in man has made the detestable crime a lucrative profession. I urge all to deal with this moral plague —M. K. G.

ALL of us men must hang our heads in shame, so long as there is a single woman whom we dedicate to our lust. I will far rather see the race of man extinct than that we should become less than beasts by making the noblest of God's creation the object of our lust. But this is not a problem merely for India. It is a world problem.

And if I preach against the modern artificial life of sensual enjoyment, and ask men and women to go back to the simple life epitomised in the charkha, I do so because I know, that without an intelligent return to simplicity, there is no escape from our descent to a state lower than brutality. I passionately desire the utmost freedom for our women. I detest child-marriages. I shudder to see a child widow, and shiver with rage when a husband, just widowed, with brutal indifference contracts another marriage. I deplore the criminal indifference of parents who keep their daughters utterly ignorant and illiterate and bring them up only for the purpose of marrying them off to some young man of means. Notwithstanding all this grief and rage, I realise the difficulty of the problem. Women must have votes and an equal legal status. But the problem does not end there. It only commences at the point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation. Woman must cease to consider herself the object of man's lust. The remedy is more in her hands than man's. She must refuse to adorn herself for men including her husband, if she will be an equal partner with man. I cannot imagine Sita ever wasting a single moment on pleasing Rama by physical charms —Y I. 21-7-1921.

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Of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of the better half of humanity to me, the female sex, not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge. A woman's intuition has often proved truer than man's arrogant assumption of superior knowledge.

Let us not delude ourselves into the belief, that this gambling in vice has a place in our evolution because it is rampant and in some cases even state-regulated in civilized Europe. Let us not also perpetuate the vice on the strength of Indian precedents.

We should cease to grow the moment we cease to discriminate between virtue and vice and slavishly copy the past which we do not fully know. We are proud heirs to all that was noblest and best in the by-gone age. We must not dishonour our heritage by multiplying past errors.

In a self-respecting India, is not every woman's virtue as much every man's concern or his sister's? Swaraj means ability to regard every inhabitant of India as our own brother or sister.

Before these unfortunate sisters could be weaned from their degradation, two conditions have to be fulfilled. We men must learn to control our passions and these women should be found a calling that would enable them to earn an honourable living.

—Y. I. 15-9-1921.

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Man to Blame

It is a matter of bitter shame and sorrow, of deep humiliation, that a number of women have to sell their chastity for man's lust. Man the lawgiver will have to pay a dreadful penalty for the degradation he has imposed upon the so-called weaker sex.

When woman, freed from man's snares, rises to the full height and rebels against man's legislation and institutions designed by him, her rebellion, no doubt non-violent, will be none the less effective.

Let man ponder over the fate of the thousands of sisters who are destined to a life of shame for his unlawful and immoral indulgence. The pity of it is that the vast majority of the men who visit these pestilential haunts are married men and therefore commit a double sin. They sin against their wives to whom they have sworn allegiance and they sin against the sisters whose purity they are bound to guard with as much jealousy as that of their own blood sisters. It is an evil which cannot last for a single day, if we men of India realise our own dignity.

If many of the most respectable among us were not steeped in the vice this kind of indulgence would be regarded as a greater crime than the stealing of a banana by a hungry man or the picking of a pocket by a youngster who is in need of money. What is worse and more hurtful to society—to steal property or to steal the honour of a woman?

Let me not be told that the public woman is party to the sale of her honour, but not the millionaire on the race-course whose pocket is picked by a professional pick-pocket. Who is worse—an urchin who picks a pocket or a scoundrel who drugs his victim and then makes him sign away the whole of his property?

Does not man by his subtle and unscrupulous ways first rob woman of her noblest instinct and then make her partner in the crime committed against her? Or are some women, like *Panchamas*, born to a life of degradation?

I ask every young man married or unmarried to contemplate the implication of what I have written. I cannot write all I have learnt about this social disease, this moral leprosy. Let his imagination fill in the rest and then let him recoil with horror and shame from the sin if he has himself been guilty of it. And let every pure man, whoever he is, do what he can to purify his neighbourhood. I know that the second part is easier written than practised. It is a delicate matter. But for its very delicacy, it demands the attention of all thoughtful men. Work among the

unfortunate sisters must be left everywhere to experts. My suggestion has reference to work among the visitors to these houses of ill-fame.—Y. I. 16-4-1925.

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Not until a woman of exceptional purity and strength of character rises and devotes herself to the task of redeeming this portion of fallen humanity will the problem of prostitution be tackled. No doubt man can do much among men who degrade themselves by enticing young women to sell themselves for their lust. Prostitution is as old as the world, but I wonder if it was ever a regular feature of town life that it is today. In any case time must come when humanity will rise against the curse and make prostitution a thing of the past, as it has got rid of many evil customs, however time honoured they might have been.

—Y. I 28-5-1925.

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The Root of the Evil

The tendency to see virtue in vice and excuse evil in the sacred name of art or some other false sentiment has clothed this debasing indulgence with a kind of subtle respectability which is responsible for the moral leprosy which he who runs may see.

Great as the evil is in this age of unbelief or a mere mechanical belief in God and an age of multiplicity of comforts and luxuries almost reminding one of the degradation to which Rome had descended when she was apparently at the zenith of her power, it is not easy to prescribe a remedy. It cannot be remedied by law.

London is seething with the vice. Paris is notorious for its vice which has almost become a fashion. If law would have prevented it, these highly organised nations would have cured their capitals of the vice. No amount of writing on the part of reformers like myself can deal with the evil in any appreciable form.

The political domination of England is bad enough. The cultural is infinitely worse. For whilst we resent and, therefore, endeavour to resist the political domination, we hug the cultural, not realising in our infatu-

ation that when the cultural domination is complete, the political will defy resistance. ,

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not wish to imply that before the British rule prostitution was unknown in India. But I do say that it was not so rampant as now. It was confined to the few upper ten. Now it is fast undoing the youth of the middle classes.

My hope lies in the youth of the country. Such of them as are prey to the vice are not vicious by nature. They are helplessly and thoughtlessly drawn in. They must realise the harm that it has done them and society. They must understand too that nothing but a rigorously disciplined life will save them and the country from utter ruin.

Above all unless they visualise God and seek His aid in keeping them from temptation, no amount of dry discipline will do them much good. Truly has the seer said in the Gita that 'desire persists though man may by fasting keep his body under restraint. Desire goes only when one has seen God face to face.' Seeing God face to face is to feel that He is enthroned in our hearts even as a child feels a mother's affection without needing any demonstration. Does the child reason out the existence of a mother's love? Can he prove it to others? He triumphantly declares, 'It is'. So must it be with the existence of God. He defies reason. But He is experienced. Let us not reject the experience of Tulsidas, Chaitanya, Ramdas and a host of other spiritual teachers even as we do not reject that of mundane teachers.

I have already remarked that man cannot be made good by law. If I had the power of persuasion I would certainly stop women of ill-fame from acting as actresses, I would prevent people from drinking and smoking, I would certainly prevent all the degrading advertisements that disfigure even reputable journals and newspapers and I would most decidedly stop the obscene literature and portraits that soil the pages of some of our magazines. But, alas, I have not the persuasive power I would gladly possess. But to regulate

these things by law... would be a remedy probably worse than the disease. What is wanted is an intelligent, sane, healthy and pure public opinion. There is no law against using kitchens as closets or drawing rooms as stables. But public opinion, that is, public taste will not tolerate such a combination. The evolution of public opinion is at times a tardy process but it is the only effective one.—Y. I 9-7-1925.

XI. THE DEVADASI

The devadasi system is a blot upon those who countenance it. It would have died long ago but for the supineness of the public. Public conscience in this country somehow or other lies dormant. It often feels the awfulness of many a wrong, but is too indifferent or too lazy to move.—M. K. G.

AS I was talking to them [i. e., devadasis] and understanding the hidden meaning of the thing, my whole soul rose in rebellion against the custom of dedicating minor girls for immoral purposes. By calling them devadasis we insult God Himself in the name of religion, and we commit a double crime in that we use these sisters of ours to serve our lust and take in the same breath the name of God. To think that there should be a class of people given to this kind of immoral service, and that there should be another class who should tolerate their hideous immorality, makes one despair of life itself. And I assure you that as I was talking to them I saw that there was no evil in their eyes, and that they were capable of fine feelings and fine character as any other women. What difference can there be between them and our own blood sisters? And if we do not allow our own sisters to be used for immoral purposes, how dare we allow these to be so used? Let Hindus who are in any way whatsoever connected with these things purge society of this pest. The majority of them have promised to retrace their steps, if I fulfil the promise I have made to them [i. e., to give them sufficient food and clothing and

education and clean surroundings.] But if they cannot, I shall blame not them but the society in which they are passing their lives. It is up to you to extend the hand of fellowship to these sisters, it is up to you to see that they are reclaimed from their life of shame. I know that when they are again face to face with temptation it will become difficult for them to resist it. But if man will restrain his lust and society stands up against the evil, it will be easily possible to rid society of the evil.—Y. I. 22-9-1927.

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The Way to Reform

Like untouchability this institution for the perpetuation of vice must go, if Hinduism is to be purified. Those who are engaged in the noble task of ridding society of the evil will have to work in a systematic manner and not become dispirited if they do not find their effort crowned with success at once. Let them concentrate on the evil immediately surrounding them. There are two ways of working at the problem. There should be work amongst those who employ devadasis for their base end, and the devadasi community itself. If the latter will refuse to serve society's vice, the system ends at once. But the process is not quite so simple. Hunger knows no sin. Even like Drona and Bhishma devadasis point to their bellies in justification of their sin. Habit has dulled their sense of sin regarding their calling. Therefore they have to be found an innocent source of livelihood in the place of prostitution. Then there is work in society. Festival and marriage parties in which devadasis are employed have to be sought out and those in charge reasoned with. Reformers may not dictate reform to society. They will have to appeal to its reason and heart. In a way all reform is a kind of education, just as essential as the education which is commonly known as such. Hence it is a science by itself, and yields results only when systematically pursued.—H 14-9-1934.

XII. TEAR DOWN THE PURDAH

The sooner it is recognised that many of our social evils impede our march towards Swaraj, the greater will be our progress towards our cherished goal. To postpone social reform till after the attainment of Swaraj is not to know the meaning of Swaraj.—M. K. G.

WHENEVER I have gone to Bengal, Bihar or the United Provinces, I have observed the purdah system more strictly followed than in the other provinces. But when I addressed a meeting at Darbhanga late at night and amid calm surroundings free from noise and bustle and unmanageable crowds, I found in front of me men, but behind me and behind the screen were women of whose presence I knew nothing till my attention was drawn to it. The function was in connection with the laying of the foundation-stone of an orphanage, but I was called upon to address the ladies behind the purdah. The sight of the screen behind which my audience, whose numbers I did not know, was seated made me sad. It pained and humiliated me deeply. I thought of the wrong being done by men to the women of India by clinging to a barbarous custom which, whatever use it might have had when it was first introduced, had now become totally useless and was doing incalculable harm to the country. All the education that we have been receiving for the past 100 years seems to have produced but little impression upon us, for I note that the purdah is being retained even in educated households not because the educated men believe in it themselves, but because they will not manfully resist the brutal custom and sweep it away at a stroke. I have the privilege of addressing hundreds of meetings of women attended by thousands. The din and the noise created at these meetings make it impossible to speak with any effect to the women who attend them. Nothing better is to be expected so long as they are caged and confined in their houses and little courtyards. When, therefore, they find themselves congregated in a big room and are expected all of a

sudden to listen to someone, they do not know what to do with themselves or with the speaker. And when silence is restored it becomes difficult to interest them in many everyday topics, for they know nothing of them, having been never allowed to breathe the fresh air of freedom. I know that this is a somewhat exaggerated picture. I am quite aware of the very high culture of these thousands of sisters whom I get the privilege of addressing. I know that they are capable of rising to the same height that men are capable of, and I know too that they do have occasions to go out. But this is not to be put down to the credit of the educated classes. The question is, why have they not gone further? Why do not our women enjoy the same freedom that men do? Why should they not be able to walk out and have fresh air?

Chastity is not a hot-house growth. It cannot be superimposed. It cannot be protected by the surrounding wall of the purdah. It must grow from within, and to be worth anything it must be capable of withstanding every unsought temptation. It must be as defiant as Sita's. It must be a very poor thing that cannot stand the gaze of men. Men, to be men, must be able to trust their womenfolk, even as the latter are compelled to trust them. Let us not live with one limb completely or partially paralysed. Rama would be nowhere without Sita, free and independent even as he was himself. But for robust independence Draupadi is perhaps a better example. Sita was gentleness incarnate. She was a delicate flower. Draupadi was a giant oak. She bent mighty Bhima himself to her imperious will. Bhima was terrible to everyone, but he was a lamb before Draupadi. She stood in no need of protection from any one of the Pandavas. By seeking today to interfere with the free growth of womanhood of India we are interfering with the growth of free and independent-spirited men. What we are doing to our women and what we are doing to the 'untouchables' recoils upon our heads with a force thousand times multiplied. It partly accounts for our own weakness,

indecision, narrowness and helplessness. Let us then tear down the purdah with one mighty effort.

—Y. I. 3-2-1927.

* * *

Purdah a Recent Institution

I am of opinion that the purdah in India is a recent institution and was adopted during the period of Hindu decline. In the age when proud Draupadi and spotless Sita lived there could be no purdah. Gargi could not have held her discourses from behind the purdah. Nor is the purdah universal in India. It is unknown in the Deccan, Gujarat and the Punjab. It is unknown among the peasantry, and one does not hear of any untoward consequences of the comparative freedom which women in these provinces and among peasantry enjoy. Nor will it be just to say that the women or men in the other parts of the world are less moral because of the absence of the purdah system . . . While I hold that the ancients gave us a moral code which is not to be surpassed, I am unable to subscribe to the doctrine of their infallibility in every detail. And who shall say what is really ancient? Are all the hundred and eight Upanishads of equal sanctity? It seems to me that we must test on the anvil of reason everything that is capable of being tested by it, and reject that which does not satisfy it even though it may appear in an ancient garb.—Y. I. 24-3-1927.

PART V

TO THE YOUTH

I. MODERN YOUTH

Innocent youth is a priceless possession not to be squandered away for the sake of a momentary excitement, miscalled pleasure —M. K. G.

IT is the fashion in some quarters nowadays for the young to discredit whatever may be said by old people. I am not prepared to say that there is absolutely no justification for this belief. But I warn the youth of the country against always discounting whatever old men or women may say for the mere fact that it is said by such persons. Even as wisdom often comes from the mouths of babes, so does it often come from the mouths of old people. The golden rule is to test everything in the light of reason and experience, no matter from whom it comes. I want to revert to the subject of birth control by contraceptives. It is drilled into one's ears that gratification of the sex urge is a solemn obligation like the obligation of discharging debts lawfully incurred, and that not to do so would involve the penalty of intellectual decay. This sex urge has been isolated from the desire for progeny, and it is said by the protagonists of the use of contraceptives that conception is an accident to be prevented except when the parties desire to have children. I venture to suggest that this is a most dangerous doctrine to preach anywhere; much more so in a country like India where the middle class male population has become imbecile through abuse of the creative function. If satisfaction of the sex urge is a duty, the unnatural vice of which I wrote some time ago and several other ways of gratification would be commendable. The reader should know that even persons of note have been known to approve of what is commonly known as sexual perversion.

He may be shocked at the statement. But if it somehow or other gains the stamp of respectability, it will be the rage among boys and girls to satisfy their urge among members of their own sex. For me the use of contraceptives is not far removed from the means to which persons have hitherto resorted for the gratification of their sexual desire with the results that very few know. I know what havoc secret vice has played among school boys and school girls. The introduction of contraceptives under the name of science and the *imprimatur* of known leaders of society has intensified the complication and made the task of reformers who work for purity of social life well-nigh impossible for the moment. I betray no confidence when I inform the reader that there are unmarried girls of impressionable age studying in schools and colleges who study birth control literature and magazines with avidity and even possess contraceptives. It is impossible to confine their use to married women. Marriage loses its sanctity when its purpose and highest use is conceived to be the satisfaction of the animal passion without contemplating the natural result of such satisfaction.

I have no doubt that those learned men and women who are carrying on propaganda with missionary zeal in favour of the use of contraceptives, are doing irreparable harm to the youth of the country under the false belief that they will be saving thereby the poor women who may be obliged to bear children against their will. Those who need to limit their children will not be easily reached by them. Our poor women have not the knowledge or the training that the women of the West have. Surely the propaganda is not being carried on on behalf of the middle class women, for they do not need the knowledge at any rate so much as the poor classes do.

The greatest harm, however, done by that propaganda lies in its rejection of the old ideal and substitution in its place of one which, if carried out, must spell the moral and physical extinction of the race. The horror with which ancient literature has regarded the fruitless

use of the vital fluid was not a superstition born of ignorance. What shall we say of a husbandman who will sow the finest seed in his possession on stony ground or of the owner of a field who will receive, in his field rich with fine soil, good seed under conditions that will make it impossible for it to grow? God has blessed man with seed that has the highest potency and woman with a field richer than the richest earth to be found anywhere on this globe. Surely it is criminal folly for man to allow his most precious possession to run to waste. He must guard it with a care greater than he will bestow upon the richest pearls in his possession. And so is a woman guilty of criminal folly who will receive the seed in her life-producing field with the deliberate intention of letting it run to waste. Both he and she will be judged guilty of misuse of the talents given to them and they will be dispossessed of what they have been given. Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity. Contraceptives of a kind there were before and there will be hereafter, but the use of them was formerly regarded as sinful. It was reserved for our generation to glorify vice by calling it virtue. The greatest disservice protagonists of contraceptives are rendering to the youth of India is to fill their minds with what appears to me to be wrong ideology. Let the young men and women of India who hold her destiny in their hands beware of this false god and guard the treasure with which God has blessed them and use it, if they wish, for the only purpose for which it is intended.—H. 28-3-1936.

II. A YOUTH'S DIFFICULTY

One must not consider continence even as between husband and wife to be so difficult as to be practically impossible. On the contrary self-restraint must be considered to be the ordinary and natural practice of life.

—M. K. G.

A CORRESPONDENT who prefers to remain anonymous seeks an answer to a question arising out of my article in *Haryan* addressed to the young. Although it is a sound rule to ignore anonymous correspondence, I do sometimes make an exception when the question put is substantial as in the present case.

The letter is in Hindi and is longer than it need have been. Its purport is :

“From your writing I doubt if you understand the young mind. What has been possible for you is not possible for all young men. I happen to be married. I can restrain myself. My wife cannot. She does not want children but she does want to enjoy herself. What am I to do ? Is it not my duty to satisfy her ? I am not generous enough to look upon her satisfying her desire through other channels. I read from the papers that you are not averse to promoting marriages and blessing them. Surely you know or ought to know that they are not contracted with the high purpose that you have mentioned.”

The correspondent is right. The fact that I bless so many marriages when they satisfy the tests that I have set as to age, economy, etc., perhaps shows somewhat that I know the youth of the country to an extent that would justify my guiding them when they seek my guidance.

My correspondent's case is typical. He deserves sympathy. That the sole purpose of sexual connection is procreation is in the nature of a new discovery for me. Though I had known the rule, I had never before given it the weight it deserved. I must have till recently regarded it as a mere pious wish. I now regard it as a fundamental law of married state, which is easy of

observance if its paramount importance is duly recognized. My object will be fulfilled when the law is given its due place in society. To me it is a living law. We break it always and pay heavily for its breach. If my correspondent realises its inestimable value and if he has love for his wife and has faith in himself, he will convert her to his view. Is he sincere when he says he can restrain himself? Has the animal passion become transmuted in his case into a higher passion, say, for service of fellow beings? Does he naturally refrain from doing anything to excite the passion in his wife? Let him know that Hindu science denotes eight kinds of unions which include sexual suggestions made even by signs. Is the correspondent free from these? If he is not, and if he is sincerely desirous that his wife should be weaned from the sexual desire, let him surround her with the purest love, let him explain the law to her, let him explain the physical effects of union without the desire for procreation, let him tell her what the vital fluid means. Let him further engage his wife in healthy pursuits and strive to regulate her diet, exercise, etc., so as to still the passion in her. Above all, if he is a man of religion, he will try to transmit to his companion his own living faith. For I must confess that the observance of the law of continence is impossible without a living faith in God which is living Truth. It is the fashion nowadays to dismiss God from life altogether and insist on the possibility of reaching the highest kind of life without the necessity of a living faith in a living God. I must confess my inability to drive the truth of the law home to those who have no faith in and no need for a Power infinitely higher than themselves. My own experience has led me to the knowledge that fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life —H. 25-4-1936.

III. HEADING FOR PROMISCUITY

Life is not a bundle of enjoyments, but a bundle of duties. That which separates man from beast is essentially man's recognition of the necessity of putting a series of restraints on worldly enjoyment —M. K. G.

THUS writes a young man :

“You want everyone to become moral in order to change the world. I do not exactly know what you mean by morality—whether you confine it to matters sexual, or whether it covers the whole field of human conduct. I suspect the former, because I do not see you pointing out to your capitalist and landlord friends the great injustice and harm they are doing by making huge profits at the expense of labourers and tenants, while you are never tired of castigating young men and women for their moral lapses in sexual matters and upholding before them the virtues of celibacy. You claim to know the mind of Indian youth. I do not claim to represent anybody, but as a solitary young man I beg to challenge your claim. You do not seem to know through what environment the modern middle-class youth is passing, what with long spells of unemployment, crushing social customs and traditions, and temptations of co-education! It is all a conflict between the old and the new ideas, resulting usually in the defeat and misery of youth. I humbly request you to be kind and compassionate to the youth and not to judge them by your puritanic standards of morality. After all, I think every act, when it is performed with mutual consent and mutual love, is moral whether it is performed within marriage or without. Since the invention of contraceptives the sexual basis of the institution of marriage has been knocked down. It has now become an institution mainly for the protection and welfare of children. You will, perhaps, be shocked at these ideas. I would here venture to ask you not to forget your own youth when

judging the present-day youth. You were an over-sexed individual given to excessive indulgence, which seems to have created in you a sort of disgust towards the sexual act, and hence your asceticism and the idea of sin. Compared to you, I think many young men of today are better in this respect."

This is from a typical letter. To my knowledge the writer has gone through several changes even during the past three months that I have known him. He is still passing through a crisis. The extract quoted is from a long letter which together with many of his other writings he would gladly have me publish. But what I have quoted just represents the attitude of many a youth.

Of course my sympathies are with young men and young women. I have a vivid recollection of the days of my own youth. And it is because of my faith in the youth of the country that I am never tired of dealing with problems that face them.

For me morals, ethics and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass' good only for making a noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, ahimsa and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practised is preferable to and derived from these three fundamental virtues. Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.

Without continence a man or woman is undone. To have no control over the senses is like sailing in a rudderless ship bound to break to pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock. Hence my constant insistence on continence. My correspondent is right in saying in effect that the coming in of contraceptives has changed the ideas about sexual relations. If mutual consent makes a sexual act moral whether within marriage or without, and by parity of reasoning even between members of the same sex, the whole basis of sexual morality is gone and nothing but 'misery

and defeat' awaits the youth of the country. Many young men and women are to be found in India who would be glad to be free from the craving for mutual intercourse in whose grip they find themselves. This craving is stronger than the strongest intoxicant which has ever enslaved man. It is futile to hope that the use of contraceptives will be restricted to the mere regulation of progeny. There is hope for a decent life only so long as the sexual act is definitely related to the conception of precious life. This rules out of court perverted sexuality and to a lesser degree promiscuity. Divorce of the sexual act from its natural consequence must lead to hideous promiscuity and condonation, if not endorsement, of unnatural vice.

Since my own experiences are relevant to the consideration of the sex problem, let me just warn the reader who has not read my autobiographical chapters against drawing the conclusion that my correspondent has drawn about my sins of indulgence. Whatever over-indulgence there was with me, it was strictly restricted to my wife. And I was living in a big joint family where there was hardly any privacy except for a few hours at night. I awoke to the folly of indulgence for the sake of it even when I was twenty-three years old, and decided upon total Brahmacharya in 1899, i.e., when I was thirty years old. It is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well considered, and taken with the greatest deliberation. Both my continence and non-violence were derived from personal experience and became necessary in response to the calls of public duty. The isolated life I had to lead in South Africa whether as a householder, legal practitioner, social reformer or politician, required, for the due fulfilment of these duties, the strictest regulation of sexual life and a rigid practice of non-violence and truth in human relations, whether with my own countrymen or with the Europeans. I claim to be no more than an average

man with less than average ability Nor can I claim any special merit for such non-violence or continence as I have been able to reach with laborious research. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith Work without faith is like an attempt to reach the bottom of a bottomless pit —H 3-10-1936.

IV. STUDENTS' SHAME

Woman, I hold, is the personification of self-sacrifice, but unfortunately today she does not realise what a tremendous advantage she has over man. As Tolstoy used to say they are labouring under the hypnotic influence of man. If they would realise the strength of non-violence, they would not consent to be called the weaker sex —M. K. G.

THERE is a most pathetic letter from a college girl in the Punjab lying on my file for nearly two months. Want of time was but an excuse for shirking the answer to the girl's question. Somehow or other I was avoiding the task, though I knew the answer. Meanwhile I received another letter from a sister of great experience, and I felt that I could no longer evade the duty of dealing with the college girl's very real difficulty. Her letter is written in chaste Hindustani I must try to do as much justice as I can to the letter, which gives me a perfect picture of her deep feeling Here is my rendering of a portion of the letter.

"To girls and grown-up women there come times, in spite of their wish to the contrary, when they have to venture out alone, whether they are going from one place to another in the same city, or from one town to another. And when they are thus found alone, evil-minded people pester them. They use improper or even indecent language whilst they are passing by. And if fear does not check them, they do not hesitate to take further liberty. I should like to know what part non-violence can play on such occasions. The

use of violence is of course there. If the girl or the woman has sufficient courage, she will use what resources she has and teach miscreants a lesson. They can at least kick up a row that would draw the attention of the people around, resulting in the miscreants being horse-whipped. But I know that the result of such treatment would be merely to postpone the agony, not a permanent cure. Where you know the people who misbehave, I feel sure that they will listen to reason, the gesture of love and humility. But what about a fellow cycling by, using foul language on seeing a girl or a woman unaccompanied by a male companion? You have no opportunity of reasoning with him. There is no likelihood of your meeting him again. You may not even recognise him. You do not know his address. What is a poor girl or a woman to do in such cases? By way of example I want to give you my own experience of last night (26th October). I was going with a girl companion of mine on a very special errand at about 7.30 p.m. It was impossible to secure a male companion at the time and the errand could not be put off. On the way a Sikh young man passed by on his cycle and continued to murmur something till we were within hearing distance. We knew that it was aimed at us. We felt hurt and uneasy. There was no crowd on the road. Before we had gone a few paces the cyclist returned. We recognised him at once whilst he was still at a respectful distance. He wheeled towards us; heaven knows whether he had intended to get down or merely pass by us. We felt that we were in danger. We had no faith in our physical prowess. I myself am weaker than the average girl. But in my hands I had a big book. Somehow or other courage came to me all of a sudden. I hurled the heavy book at the cycle and roared out, 'Dare you repeat your pranks?' He could with difficulty keep his balance, put on speed and fled from us. Now, if I had not flung the book at his cycle, he might have harassed us by his filthy language to the

end of our journey. This was an ordinary, perhaps insignificant, occurrence; but I wish you could come to Lahore and listen to the difficulties of us unfortunate girls. You would surely discover a proper solution. First of all, tell me how, in the circumstances mentioned above, can girls apply the principle of ahimsa and save themselves. Secondly, what is the remedy for curing youth of the abominable habit of insulting womenfolk? You would not suggest that we should wait and suffer till a new generation, taught from childhood to be polite to their womenfolk, comes into being. The Government is either unwilling or unable to deal with this social evil. The big leaders have no time for such questions. Some, when they hear of a girl bravely castigating ill-behaved youth, say, 'Well done. That is the way all girls should behave.' Sometimes a leader is found eloquently lecturing against such misbehaviour of students. But no one applies himself continuously to the solution of this serious problem. You will be painfully surprised to know that during Diwali and such other holidays newspapers come out with notices warning women from venturing outdoors even to see the illuminations. This one fact should enable you to know to what straits we are reduced in this part of the world! Neither the writers nor the readers of such warnings have any sense of shame that they should have to be issued."

Another Punjabi girl to whom I gave the letter to read supports the narrative from her own experiences of her college days and tells me that what my correspondent has related is the common experience of most girls.

The other letter from an experienced woman relates the experiences of her girl friends in Lucknow. They are molested in cinema theatres by boys sitting in the row behind them using all kinds of language which I can only call indecent. They are stated to resort even to practical jokes which have been described by my

correspondent but which I must not reproduce here.

If the immediate personal relief was all that was needed, no doubt the remedy that the girl who describes herself to be physically weak adopted, i.e. of flinging her book at the cyclist, was quite correct. It is an age-long remedy. And I have said in these columns that when a person wants to become violent, physical weakness does not come in the way of its effective use, even against a physically powerful opponent. And we know that in the present age there have been invented so many methods of using physical force that even a little girl with sufficient intelligence can deal death and destruction. The fashion nowadays is growing of training girls to defend themselves in situations such as the one described by my correspondent. But she is wise enough to know that even though she was able to make effective use for the moment of the book she had in her hand as a weapon of defence, it was no remedy for the growing evil. In the cases of rude remarks, there need be no perturbation but there should be no indifference. All such cases should be published in the papers. Names of the offenders should be published when they are traced. There should be no false modesty about exposing the evil. There is nothing like public opinion for castigating public misconduct. There is no doubt that, as the correspondent says, there is great public apathy about such matters. But it is not the public alone that are to blame. They must have before them examples of rudeness. Even as stealing cannot be dealt with unless cases of thieving are published and followed up, so also as it impossible to deal with cases of rude behaviour if they are suppressed. Crime and vice generally require darkness for prowling. They disappear when light plays upon them.

But I have a fear that the modern girl loves to be Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. She loves adventure. My correspondent seems to represent the unusual type. The modern girl dresses not to protect herself from wind, rain and sun but to attract attention. She

STUDENTS' SHAME

improves upon nature by painting herself and looking extraordinary. The non-violent way is not for such girls. I have often remarked in these columns that definite rules govern the development of the non-violent spirit in us. It is a strenuous effort. It marks a revolution in the way of thinking and living. If my correspondent and the girls of her way of thinking will revolutionize their life in the prescribed manner, they will soon find that young men, who at all come in contact with them, will learn to respect them and to put on their best behaviour in their presence. But if perchance they find, as they may, that their very chastity is in danger of being violated, they must develop courage enough to die rather than yield to the brute in man. It has been suggested that a girl who is gagged or bound so as to make her powerless even for struggling cannot die as easily as I seem to think. I venture to assert that a girl who has the will to resist can burst all the bonds that may have been used to render her powerless. The resolute will gives her the strength to die.

But this heroism is possible only for those who have trained themselves for it. Those who have not a living faith in non-violence will learn the ordinary art of self-defence and protect themselves from indecent behaviour of unchivalrous youth.

The great question, however, is why should young men be devoid of elementary good manners so as to make decent girls be in perpetual fear of molestation from them? I should be sorry to discover that the majority of young men have lost all sense of chivalry. But they should, as a class, be jealous of their reputation and deal with every case of impropriety occurring among their mates. They must learn to hold the honour of every woman as dear as that of their own sisters and mothers. All the education they receive will be in vain if they do not learn good manners.

And is it not as much the concern of professors and schoolmasters to ensure gentlemanliness among their pupils as to prepare them for the subjects prescribed for the classroom?—H 31-12-1938.

V. THE MODERN GIRL

The modern girl has a special meaning. . . But all the girls who receive English education are not modern girls. I know many who are not at all touched by the 'modern girl' spirit. But there are some who have become modern girls.—M. K. G.

I HAVE received a letter written on behalf of eleven girls whose names and addresses have been sent to me. I give it below with changes that make it more readable without in any way altering the meaning:—

“Your comments on the letter of a lady student captioned ‘Students’ Shame’ and published in *Haryana* of the 31st December, 1938, deserve special attention. The modern girl, it seems, has provoked you to the extent that you have disposed of her finally as one playing Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. This remark which betrays your idea about women in general is not very inspiring.

In these days when women are coming out of closed doors to help men and take an equal share of the burden of life, it is indeed strange that they are still blamed even when they are maltreated by men. It cannot be denied that instances can be cited where the fault is equally divided. There may be a few girls playing Juliets to half a dozen Romeos. But such cases presuppose the existence of half a dozen Romeos, moving about the streets in quest of a Juliet. And it cannot or should never be taken that modern girls are categorically all Juliets or modern youths all Romeos. You yourself have come in contact with quite a number of modern girls and may have been struck by their resolution, sacrifice and other sterling womanly virtues.

As for forming public opinion against such misdemeanours as pointed out by your correspondent, it is not for girls to do it, not so much out of false shame as from its ineffectiveness.

But a statement like this from one revered all over the world seems to hold a brief once more for that

worn out and unbecoming saying 'woman is the gate of Hell.'

From the foregoing remarks, however, please do not conclude that modern girls have no respect for you. They hold you in as much respect as every young man does. To be hated or pitied is what they resent much. They are ready to mend their ways if they are really guilty. Their guilt, if any, must be conclusively proved before they are anathematized. In this respect they would neither desire to take shelter under the covering of 'ladies, please', nor would they silently stand and allow the judge to condemn them in his own way. Truth must be faced; the modern girl or 'Juliet', as you have called her, has courage enough to face it."

My correspondents do not perhaps know that I began service of India's women in South Africa more than forty years ago when perhaps none of them was born. I hold myself to be incapable of writing anything derogatory to womanhood. My regard for the fair sex is too great to permit me to think ill of them. She is, what she has been described to be in English, the better half of mankind. And my article was written to expose students' shame, not to advertise the frailties of girls. But in giving the diagnosis of the disease, I was bound, if I was to prescribe the right remedy, to mention all the factors which induced the disease.

The modern girl has a special meaning. Therefore there was no question of my restricting the scope of my remark to some. But all the girls who receive English education are not modern girls. I know many who are not at all touched by the 'modern girl' spirit. But there are some who have become modern girls. My remark was meant to warn India's girl students against copying the modern girl and complicating a problem that has become a serious menace. For, at the time I received the letter referred to, I received also a letter from an Andhra girl student bitterly complaining of the behaviour of Andhra students which from the description given is worse than what was described by

the Lahore girl. This daughter of Andhra tells me the simple dress of her girl friends gives them no protection, but they lack the courage to expose the barbarism of the boys who are a disgrace to the institution they belong to. I commend this complaint to the authorities of the Andhra University.

The eleven girls I invite to initiate a crusade against the rude behaviour of students. God helps only those who help themselves. The girls must learn the art of protecting themselves against the ruffianly behaviour of man.—H. 4-2-1939.

VI. A SISTER'S QUESTIONS

I have always held that it is physically impossible to violate a woman against her will.—M. K. G.

Q. "How is one to protect the honour of women?"

A. "I am afraid you do not read *Harijan* regularly. I discussed this question years ago, and have discussed it often since. The question may be discussed under two heads: (1) how is a woman to protect her own honour? and (2) how are her male relatives to protect it?

"As regards the first question, where there is a non-violent atmosphere, where there is the constant teaching of ahimsa, woman will not regard herself as dependent, weak or helpless. She is not really helpless when she is really pure. Her purity makes her conscious of her strength. I have always held that it is physically impossible to violate a woman against her will. The outrage takes place only when she gives way to fear or does not realise her moral strength. If she cannot meet the assailant's physical might, her purity will give her the strength to die before he succeeds in violating her. Take the case of Sita. Physically she was a weakling before Ravana, but her purity was more than a match even for his giant might. He tried to win her with all kinds of allurements but could not carnally touch her without her consent. On the other hand, if a woman depends on her own physical strength or

upon a weapon she is sure to be discomfited whenever her strength is exhausted.

"The second question is easily answered. The brother or father or friend will stand between his protege and her assailant. He will then either dissuade the assailant from his wicked purpose or allow himself to be killed by him in preventing him. In so laying down his life he will not only have done his duty, but given a new accession of strength to his protege who will now know how to protect her honour."

"But" said one of the sisters from Poona, "there lies the rub. How is a woman to lay down her life? Is it possible for her to do so?"

"Oh!" said Gandhiji, "any day more possible for her than for man. I know that women are capable of throwing away their lives for a much lesser purpose. Only a few days ago a young girl of twenty burnt herself to death as she felt she was being persecuted for refusing to go in for ordinary studies. And she perished with such cool courage and determination. She ignited her sari with an ordinary oil-light and did not so much as raise a cry, so that the people in the neighbouring room were unaware of the happening until all was over. I do not give these details to commend her example, but to show how easily woman can throw away her life. I, at any rate, am incapable of this courage. But I agree that it is not the external light but the inner light that is needed."

The same sister wondered how one was to avoid anger and violence altogether in dealing with children. "You know our old adage," said Gandhiji laughing heartily, "play with him till he is five, hammer him for ten years, treat him as your friend when he is sixteen." "But," he added, "don't you worry. If you have to be angry with your child on occasions, I shall call that anger non-violent anger. I am speaking of wise mothers, not the ignorant ones who do not deserve to be mothers."—H. 1-9-1940

VII. SELF-DEFENCE FOR WOMEN

It is my firm conviction that a fearless woman who knows that her purity is her best shield can never be dishonoured.—M. K. G.

THE whole world is on trial today. No one can escape from the war. Whilst the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are products of poets' imagination, their authors were not mere rhymsters. They were seers. What they depicted is happening before our very eyes today. Ravanases are warring with each other. They are showing matchless strength. They throw their deadly weapons from the air. No deed of bravery in the battlefield is beyond their capacity or imagination.

Man would not fight in this manner, certainly not the gods. Only brutes can. Soldiers drunk with the pride of physical strength loot shops and are not even ashamed to take liberties with women. The administration is powerless in war time to prevent such happenings. The army fulfils their primary need, and they wink the eye at their misdeeds. Where a whole nation is militarised the way of military life becomes part and parcel of its civilisation. Therefore, a soldier's taking such liberties is not a matter for condemnation. But it would take generations for India to become so.

Hence arise questions like the following which a sister sends me :

- “(1) If a soldier commits an assault on a woman, can she be said to have lost her virtue?
- (2) Is such a woman to be condemned and ostracised by society?
- (3) What should women and the public do under such circumstances?”

Whilst the woman has in point of fact lost her virtue, the loss cannot in any way render her liable to be condemned or treated as an outcaste. She is entitled to our sympathy for she has been cruelly injured, and we should tend her wounds as we would those of any injured person.

A woman is worthy of condemnation only when

she is a willing party to her dishonour. In no case are adultery and criminal assault synonymous terms. If we were to view the matter in this light, we would not hide such instances as has thus far been our wont. Public opinion against such conduct on the part of men towards women would then be created and freely exercised.

If the press carried on a substantial agitation, soldiers white or brown would probably cease to behave in this manner. Their officers would be compelled to prevent such misbehaviour.

My advice to women is that they should leave the cities and migrate to the villages where a wide field of service awaits them. There is comparatively little risk of their being assaulted in villages. They must, however, live simple lives and make themselves one with the poor. If they will display their wealth by dressing in silks and satins and wearing jewellery, they will, in running away from one danger, expose themselves to a double. Naturally the advice cannot refer to those whom duty compels to live in cities.

The main thing, however, is, for women to know how to be fearless. It is my firm conviction that a fearless woman who knows that her purity is her best shield can never be dishonoured. However beastly the man, he will bow in shame before the flame of her dazzling purity. There are examples even in modern times of women who have thus defended themselves. I can, as I write, recall two such instances. I therefore recommend women who read this article to try to cultivate this courage. They will become wholly fearless, if they can and cease to tremble as they do today at the mere thought of assaults. It is not, however, necessary for a woman to go through a bitter experience for the sake of passing a test of courage. These experiences mercifully do not come in the way of lakhs or even thousands... Parents and husbands should, therefore, instruct women in the art of becoming fearless. It can best be learnt from a living faith in God. Though He is invisible, He is one's unfailing protector. He

who has this faith is the most fearless of all.

But such faith or courage cannot be acquired in a day. Meantime we must try to explore other means. When a woman is assaulted she may not stop to think in terms of himsa or ahimsa. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that come to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails and teeth. She must use them with all her strength and, if need be, die in the effort. The man or woman who has shed all fear of death will be able not only to protect himself or herself but others also through laying down his (or her) life. In truth we fear death most, and hence we ultimately submit to superior physical force. Some will bend the knee to the invader, some will resort to bribery, some will crawl on their bellies or submit to other forms of humiliation, and some women will even give their bodies rather than die. I have not written this in a carping spirit. I am only illustrating human nature. Whether we crawl on our bellies or whether a woman yields to the lust of man is symbolic of the same love of life which makes us stoop to anything. Therefore only he who loses his life shall save it: *Tena Tyaktena Bhunjeethah*. Every reader should commit this matchless *shloka* to memory. But mere lip loyalty to it will be of no avail. It must penetrate deep down to the innermost recesses of his heart. To enjoy life one must give up the lure of life. That should be part of our nature.—H. 1-3-1942.

PART VI

DIET AND HEALTH

HINTS ON DIET AND HEALTH

The diet of a man of self-restraint must be different from that of a man of pleasure, just as their ways of life must be different. Aspirants after Brahmacharya often defeat their own end by adopting courses suited to a life of pleasure.—M. K. G.

'CONTROL of the Palate' is very closely connected with the observance of Brahmacharya. I have found from experience that the observance of celibacy becomes very easy directly one acquires mastery over taste.

Conquest of the palate does not figure among the observances of time-honoured recognition, perhaps because even great sages found it difficult to achieve.

We must take food as we take medicine, that is, without thinking whether it is palatable or otherwise, and only in a limited quantity corresponding to the needs of the body. Just as medicine taken in too small a dose does not take effect or the full effect, and as too large a dose injures the system, so it is with food as well.

It is, therefore, a breach of this principle to take anything just for its pleasant taste. It is equally a breach to take too large a quantity of any fine dish. Most of us, instead of keeping the body and the organs of sense under control, become the latter's slaves.

An experienced physician observed that he had never seen a healthy man in the world. The body is injured every time that one over-eats, and the injury can be repaired only by fasting.

No one need take fright at this line of thinking, or give up the observance in despair. When we take a vow, that does not mean that we are able to observe it

perfectly from the very beginning; it only means constant and honest effort in thought, word and deed with a view to its fulfilment.

We must not practise self-deception by making too wide a definition of a principle, simply because it is difficult to observe. To degrade an ideal for our convenience is to practise untruth and to lower ourselves.

To understand an ideal and then to make a herculean effort to reach it, no matter how difficult it is, this is the *summum bonum* of human life. One who at all times fulfils the *Mahavratas* in their perfection has nothing else left for him to do in this world, he is *Bhagwan*, he is a *yogi*.

We humble seekers need only put forth a slow but steady endeavour which is sure to win divine grace for us in God's good time, and all relish will then disappear with the realisation of the Highest.

If we realise the importance of this principle, we must make every increasing effort in order to observe it in perfection. We need not be thinking of food all the twenty-four hours of the day. The only thing needful is perpetual vigilance, which will help us to find out very soon when we eat for self-indulgence and when in order only to sustain the body.

This being discovered, we must strongly set our faces against mere indulgence. A common kitchen where this principle is observed is very helpful in this connection; as it relieves us from the necessity of thinking out the *menu* for each day, and provides us with acceptable food which we must take in a quantity sufficient for ourselves with a contented and thankful mind disinclined to cavil at it.

We in that case are easily enabled to observe this rule. The authorities of the common kitchen lighten our burden and serve as the watch-dogs of our observance. They will not prepare any dish just because it is delicious; they will cook only such food as helps us to keep our body a fit instrument for service.

In an ideal state of things there will be little or no use of fire at all for cooking purposes; man will use as

food only such dishes as are cooked by the Great Fire in the shape of the sun, and will become, as he was intended to be, a fruitarian. But we need not here dive to such a depth, our object has been to consider the implication and the difficulties of the observance, and its intimate relation with the observance of Brahmacharya.—Y. I. 21-8-1930.

Man's Natural Diet

It is my firm conviction, that man need take no milk at all, beyond the mother's milk that he takes as a baby. His diet should consist of nothing but sunbaked fruits and nuts. He can secure enough nourishment both for the tissues and the nerves from fruits like grapes and nuts like almonds. Restraint of the sexual and other passions becomes easy for a man who lives on such food. My co-workers and I have seen by experience, that there is much truth in the Indian proverb, that as a man eats, so shall he become (p.45).

For the seeker who would live in fear of God, and who would see Him face to face, restraint in diet both as to quantity and quality is as essential as restraint in thought and speech. (p 47).

Passion in man is generally co-existent with a hankering after the pleasures of the palate. (pp 157-8).

One should eat not in order to please the palate but just to keep the body going. When each organ of sense subserves the body and through the body the soul, its special relish disappears, and then alone does it begin to function in the way nature intended it to do. Any number of experiments is too small and no sacrifice is too great for attaining this symphony with nature. But unfortunately the current is nowadays flowing strongly in the opposite direction. We are not ashamed to sacrifice a multitude of other lives in decorating the perishable body and trying to prolong its existence for a few fleeting moments, with the result that we kill ourselves both body and soul. In trying to cure one old disease, we give rise to a hundred new ones; in trying to enjoy the pleasures of sense we lose in the end even

our capacity for enjoyment. All this is passing before our very eyes, but there are none so blind as those who will not see. (pp. 160-1).

Though I have made out an intimate connection between diet and *Brahmacharya*, it is certain that mind is the principal thing. A mind consciously unclean cannot be cleansed by fasting. Modifications in diet have no effect on it. The concupiscence of the mind cannot be rooted out except by intense self-examination, surrender to God, and lastly grace. But there is an intimate connection between the mind and the body, and the carnal mind always lusts for delicacies and luxuries. To obviate this tendency dietetic restrictions and fasting would appear to be necessary. The carnal mind instead of controlling the senses becomes their slave, and therefore the body always needs clean non-stimulating foods and periodical fasting. Those who make light of dietetic restrictions and fasting are as much in error as those who stake their all on them. My experience teaches me that for those whose minds are working towards self-restraint dietetic restrictions and fasting are very helpful. In fact without their help concupiscence cannot be completely rooted out of the mind. (pp. 180-1)—S.M.E.T. Vol. II.

* * *

Eating for pleasure, for the gratification of the palate, is not natural to man. But eating to live is natural. And so is the sexual act, but not gratification, for the sake of perpetuation of the species, natural to man. . . . Complete renunciation of the (sexual) desire no doubt requires an effort, but is it not worth the prize? If a life-time may be devoted to the exploration of the properties of sound or light and heat, which after all only show us the phenomenal world to advantage, is it too much to expect an equal effort to attain complete renunciation which leads to self-realisation or in other words, to a certain knowledge of God?

—Y. I. 8-7-1926.

Flesh-food

I do not regard flesh-food as necessary for us at any

stage and under any clime in which it is possible for human beings ordinarily to live. I hold flesh-food to be unsuited to it. Experience teaches that animal food is unsuited to those who would curb their passions. But it is wrong to over-estimate the importance of food in the formation of character or in subjugating the flesh. Diet is a powerful factor not to be neglected. But to sum up all religion in terms of diet, as is often done in India, is as wrong as it is to disregard all restraint in regard to diet and to give full reins to one's appetite.

—Y. I. 7-10-1926.

* * *

A man who wants to control his animal passions easily does so if he controls his palate. I fear this is one of the most difficult vows to follow. Unless we are prepared to rid ourselves of stimulating, heating and exciting condiments we shall certainly not be able to control the over-abundant, unnecessary and exciting stimulation of the animal passions. If we do not do that we are likely to abuse the sacred trust of our bodies that has been given us, and to become less than animals and brutes, eating, drinking, and indulging in passions which we share with animals. But have you ever seen a horse or cow indulging in the abuse of the palate as we do?—M. G's I. pp 105-6.

APPENDIX

GENERATION AND REGENERATION*

(By William Loftus Hare)

I. GENERATION IN BIOLOGY

MICROSCOPIC observation of unicellular life has revealed the fact that in the lowest forms reproduction takes place by fission. Growth follows on nourishment until the maximum size for the species is reached, and then the organism divides its nucleus into two, and soon afterwards its body. Given the normal conditions,—water and nourishment,—this appears to exhaust its functions: but in the case of denial of these conditions there is sometimes observed a reconjunction of two cells, from which rejuvenation but not reproduction may result.

In multicellular life there is nourishment and growth as in the life below it, but a new phenomenon is observed. The group of cells constituting the body are mostly differentiated to separate functions: some for obtaining nourishment, some for its distributions, some for locomotion and some for protection, as, for instance, the skin. The primitive function of fission is abandoned by those to whom new duties are assigned, but is preserved by those cells which occupy a more interior position in the organism. These are guarded and served by the others which have undergone varied differentiation, while they themselves remain as they were. They divide as before, but *within* the multicellular body; and at length some are extruded from it. They have, however, gained a new power; instead of dividing in two as their ancestors did, they undergo segmentation or multiplication of nuclei without separation. This process continues until the organism has reached the normal size and structure of its

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multicellular species. But in the body we may observe a new feature; the original deposit of germ-cells are not only or chiefly extruded for external reproduction, they themselves supply a continuous stream of fresh units from their group for interior differentiation, where-soever they are needed. These undifferentiated germ-cells are thus performing two functions simultaneously, namely: internal reproduction for the building up of the body and external reproduction for the continuation of the species. Here we may clearly distinguish two processes, which we shall call *regeneration and generation*. One point more is important here: the regenerative process—internal reproduction—is fundamental for the individual, and therefore necessary and primary: the generative process is due to a superfluity of cells, and is therefore secondary. Probably both are closely dependent on nourishment: for if this be low, there will be a deficiency of internal reproduction and no necessity for, or possibility of, external reproduction. The law of life, then, at this level is to feed the germ-cells, firstly for regeneration, secondly for generation. In case of deficiency, regeneration must take the first place and generation be suspended. Thus we may learn the origin of the suspension of reproduction and follow it to its later phases of human continence and asceticism generally. Inner reproduction can never be suspended except at the cost of death, the normal origin of which is thus also discerned.

II. REGENERATION IN BIOLOGY

BEFORE passing to the animal and human species, in which sexual differentiation has reached its highest phase and become the norm, we must glance at the intermediate form of reproduction, namely, that which preceded the bi-sexual and followed the non-sexual forms. It has received the mythological name 'hermaphrodite,' because it possessed both male and female functions. There still remain a few organisms which exhibit this condition, in which the internal multipli-

cation of germ-cells goes on as above described, but instead of their entire extrusion for external growth they are only temporarily extruded and passed by intrusion to another part of the body, where they are nurtured until able to begin a life of their own.

The law of growth seems to be that individuals, whether unicellular, multicellular or hermaphrodite, have the potentiality of developing to the stage reached by the parent creature at the time of their extrusion. Thus it is the individual that progresses; each time it gives birth to offspring it is or may be in itself in a higher state of organisation than it was before; consequently its offspring will be able to reach the normal point of development attained by its parent. The length of the reproduction period for each species and each individual will differ; but ideally it extends from maturity to approaching decline. Premature or decadent reproduction will secure an inferior offspring according to its dominant conditions. Here, then, we perceive a law for sexual ethic derived from physical conditions: the period when generation is most favourable to the reproduction of the species and to regeneration is full maturity only.

I pass by the history of the differentiation in sex which follows the hermaphrodite, because it is a fact which may be taken for granted. It is necessary to observe, however, a new condition that has made its appearance with the bi-sexual forms. Not only have the 'two halves' of the hermaphrodite become physically separate, but each continues to produce germ-cells independently of the other. The male continues the ancient, fundamental process of internal reproduction by the multiplication of germ-cells (which for external reproduction by extrusion and intrusion are known as *spermatozoa*): the female does likewise, reserving rather than extruding the ova for impregnation by the male germ-cells. In both cases regeneration is primary and absolutely necessary for the individual. Every moment of growth from conception onwards exhibits the increasing process of regeneration.

At maturity in the human species generation may take place, but not necessarily for the good of the individual, only for the race. Here, as in the lower forms, if regeneration ceases or is imperfectly performed, disease or death will supervene. Here, too, there is rivalry of interest between the individual and the future race. If there be not superfluity, the use of the germ-cells for generative reproduction will deprive the process of regeneration (internal reproduction) of some of its material. As a matter of fact among civilised human beings sexual intercourse is practised vastly more than is necessary for the production of the next generation, and is carried on at the expense of internal reproduction, bringing disease, death and more in its train.

Another and perhaps closer glance may be taken of the human body, using that of the male as an example, though *mutatis mutandis*, the female exhibits similar processes.

The central reservoir of germ-cells is the most ancient and fundamental location of biological life. From the first the embryo, daily and hourly, grows by the multiplication of cells nourished by the mother's secretions; here again *feed the germ-cells* is the law of life. As they multiply and differentiate, they assume new forms and functions transitory or permanent as the case may be. The movement of physical birth makes little difference to the process: now through the lips instead of through the *nexus* the infant takes nourishment to feed germ-cells; these in their turn rapidly multiply and pass all over the body to places where they are needed, as they always are, to make good disused tissues. The circulatory system absorbs these cells from their primal seat and disperses them to every part of the body. In great groups they take on special duties and form and repair the different organs of the body. They undergo death a thousand times so that life may be preserved in the society of cells to which they belong, all these 'corpses' going to the periphery, and especially to the bones, teeth, skin and hair, hardening in such a way as to give

strength and protection to the body. Their death is the price of the higher life of the body and all that is dependent upon it. If they did not take nourishment, reproduce, disperse, differentiate and eventually die, the body could not live.

From the germ or sexual cells as already said come two kinds of life: (1) internal, or regenerative; (2) external, or generative. Regeneration, then, as we have called it, is the basis of the life of the body, and it draws its life from the same source as does generation. Hence it may be perceived how, in given circumstances, the two processes may be formally opposed to one another, and more than formally they may be actually at enmity.

III. REGENERATION AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

THE process of regeneration is not and cannot be mechanistic in character, but like the primitive fission, is vitalistic. That is to say, it exhibits intelligence and will. To suppose that life separates, differentiates and segregates by a process that is purely mechanistic is inconceivable. True, these fundamental processes are so far removed from our present consciousness as to seem to be uncontrolled by the human or animal will. But a moment's reflection will show that just as the will of the fully developed human being directs his external movements and actions in accordance with the guidance of the intellect,—this, indeed, being its function,—so the earlier processes of the gradual organization of the body must, within the limits provided by environment, be allowed to be directed by a kind of will guided by a kind of intelligence. This is now known to psychologists as 'the unconscious.' It is a part of our self, disconnected from our normal daily thinking, but intensely awake and alert in regard to its own functions—so much so that it never for a moment subsides into sleep as the consciousness does.

The unconscious, then, is the vital force which superintends the complex processes of regeneration.

Its first task is the segmentation of the impregnated ovum and thereafter, until death, it continues to preserve its appropriate organism by absorbing and despatching the fundamental germ-cells to their respective stations. Though I here may seem to contradict many notable psychologists, I would say that the Unconscious is only concerned with the individual and not with the species. therefore, first with regeneration. Only in one sense can the Unconscious be said to concern itself with the future generation; to whatsoever state of organization its energy has brought the individual, that the Unconscious seeks to conserve. But it cannot do the impossible; it cannot, even with the help of the conscious will, prolong life indefinitely. Therefore it reproduces itself by the impulse of sexual intercourse, in which it may be said the Unconscious and the conscious wills unite. The gratification, normally, of sexual intercourse may be taken as a sign of there being some purpose to be served beyond that of the individual, who eventually pays a price more heavy than he knows. This truth is expressed intuitively in the words of the Hebrew writer who puts a solemn warning into the divine lips. "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children."—(Gen iii, 16)

IV. GENERATION AND DEATH

[T is undesirable to load this article with extracts from the writings of scientific specialists, but as the matter here dealt with is so important, and popular ignorance so widespread, I am compelled to make some authoritative quotations. Ray Lankester says: "It results from the constitution of the protozoon body as a single cell, and its method of multiplication by fission, that death has no place as a natural recurrent phenomenon among these organisms."

Weismann writes: "Natural death occurs only among multicellular organisms, the single-celled forms escape it. There is no end to their development which

can be likened to death, nor is the rise of new individuals associated with the death of the old. In the division the two portions are equal: neither is the older nor the younger. Thus there arises an unending series of individuals, each as old as the species itself, each with the power of living on indefinitely, ever dividing, but never dying."

Patrick Geddes writes (in *The Evolution of Sex*, from which the above extracts are taken): "Death, we may thus say, is the price paid for a body, the penalty its attainment and possession sooner or later incurs. Now by a body is meant a complex colony of cells in which there is more or less division of labour." (p.20)

Again, to quote Weismann's striking words: "The body or *Soma* thus appears to a certain extent as a subsidiary appendage of the true bearers of life—the reproductive cells."

And Ray Lankester has the same idea: "Among multicellular animals certain cells are separated from the rest of the constituent units of the body...The bodies of the higher animals, which die, may from this point of view be regarded as something temporary and non-essential, destined merely to carry for a time, to nurse and to nourish the more important and deathless fission-products."

But the most striking, and probably most surprising fact among the data before us is the close connection, in higher organisms, between reproduction and death, a subject upon which many scientists write with clarity and certainty. *The nemesis of reproduction is death.* This is patent in many species, where the organism, sometimes the male and sometimes the female, not infrequently dies in continuing the life of the species. Survival of the individual after reproduction is a triumph of life that is not always attained—in some cases never. In his essay on death Goette has well shown how closely and necessarily bound together are the facts of reproduction and death, which may both be described as katabolic crises. Patrick Geddes writes on this subject (p. 255 *op. cit.*): "The

association of death and reproduction is indeed patent enough, but the connection is in popular language usually misstated. Organisms, one hears, have to die; they must therefore reproduce, else the species would come to an end. But such emphasis on posterior utilities is almost always only an afterthought of our invention. The true statement, as far as history furnishes an answer, is not that they reproduce because they have to die, but that they die because they have to reproduce."

And Goette says briefly: "It is not death that makes reproduction necessary, but reproduction has death as its inevitable consequence."

After giving a large number of instances Geddes concludes with these remarkable words: "In the higher animals the fatality of the reproductive sacrifice has been greatly lessened, yet death may tragically persist, even in human life, as the direct nemesis of love. The temporarily exhausting effect of even moderate sexual indulgence is well known, as well as the increased liability to all forms of disease while the physical energies are thus lowered."

This discussion may be summed up briefly and, I hope, conclusively by saying that in human life the sexual act is essentially katabolic (or a movement towards death) in the male and in parturition of the offspring it is katabolic for the female.

A whole chapter could be written on the effect of undue indulgence on the health of the body. Virility, old age, vitality and immunity from disease are the normal lot of nearly or quite continent persons. A proof of this, if a rather unpleasant one, is derived from the fact that a very large number of diseases in men have been and are cured by the artificial injection of semen into debilitated persons.

There may well be a resistance in the mind of the reader to accepting the conclusions offered in the present section of this essay. People will hastily point to the many old and apparently healthy persons who have been parents of large families; they will quote statistics which show that the married live longer than

the celibates, and so forth. Neither of these arguments have force in face of the fact that death, scientifically conceived, is not an event which occurs at the end of life but a process which begins—as shown by the authorities I have quoted—with life itself, and continues, moment by moment, to run alongside with life. Anabolic repair and katabolic waste are the parallel forces of life and death. The first leads in the race during youth and early manhood; in middle life they run neck and neck, but in decline the death process gains the lead, and with the last breath, conquers. Everything which leads to this Conquest, which hastens it by a day, a year or a decade, is part of the death process. And such, indeed, is sexual intercourse, especially when practised to excess.

It is sufficient to say here to those who doubt the authority of my words above that they may do well to consult a most interesting and informative work entitled *The Problem of Age, Growth and Death*, by Charles S. Minot [1908, John Murray], in which the author expounds the physiology of decay and death. Not being a medical book, but a group of popular lectures, specific diseases and sexuality are but lightly discussed. The one fact upon which I rely is that natural death is a process, not an isolated event. But the book that I value above all others on the subject of sexuality is *Regeneration, the Gate of Heaven* by Dr. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie [Boston; the Barta Press], whose title indicates a predominantly spiritual aim, although the physical and ethical aspects are fully discussed, and supported by hosts of scientific and patristic authorities. Strangely enough, however, the author does not emphasize the relation of sex to death, which is the subject of this section of my essay.

V. THE ORGAN OF THE MIND

THE extent of the static opposition between generation and regeneration may be realized when we consider the higher functions of the body, and particularly the physical organ of the mind. The nervous system—cerebro-spinal and sympathetic—are, like all other organs, built up of cells that have once been germ-cells, drawn from the deepest seat of life: in continuous streams they are distributed and differentiated to the ganglia of the systems, and of course, in immense quantities to the brain. Withdrawal of germ-cells from their upward, regenerative course for generative or merely indulgent purposes, deprives the organs of their full replenishing stock of life, to their cost, slowly and ultimately. It is these physical facts which constitute the basis of a personal sexual ethic, counselling moderation if not restraint,—at any rate explaining the origin of restraint, as said above.

I do not hesitate to add to this section one illustration out of several which might be adduced, to show how closely in some philosophical systems continence is believed to minister to mental and spiritual vigour. I allude to the Indian system of Yoga. The reader may refer to any of the standard translations of *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* (that by James H Woods in the Harvard Oriental Series is the best known to me) in order to test the brief statement I now make.

It is probably known to those who are familiar with Indian religious and social life that asceticism was and is still practised by the Hindus. Originally called *tapas*, it had two aims, one to maintain and increase the powers of the body and the other to transcend the normal powers of the mind. Traditionally one is known as *hathayoga* and is carried to extraordinary degrees of attainment, making bodily perfection an end in itself. The other, known as *rajayoga*, is directed rather towards intellectual and mystical development. Yet the two systems have in common an essential physical ethic, to which I now call attention. This is set forth in the

classical *sutras* of Patanjali and in many later works derived from this master psychologist of ancient India.

Among the 'hindrances' to the desired attainment, 'passion' is said to be the third (II. 7). Passion is that greed or thirst or desire for either pleasure or the means of attaining it, says the philosopher. Pleasure is to be rejected by the *yogin* because it is intermingled with pain (II.15). That disposes of the psychological attraction of sexuality, and in later *sutras* we are led to physical considerations.

There are eight aids to *yoga's* end; the first and second are called "Abstention and observances" and constitute the preliminary ethic which the *yogin* must observe. It is astonishing that the many babblers on the *yoga* systems either do not know or refrain from saying that the fourth abstention is "Abstinence from incontinence" (II. 30), and that "Continence is the control of the hidden organ of generation."

But the consequences of the abstention from incontinence are remarkably rich according to this philosopher, who says (II. 38): "As soon as he is grounded in abstinence he acquires energy—that is power. By the acquisition of which he accumulates qualities such as minuteness...and when perfected he is endowed with the eight perfections, of which the first is called 'Reasoning.' He is able to transfer his thinking to his hearers."

Happy man! Rare attainment! A modern Indian scholar, M. N. Dvivedi, has a very significant comment on this *sutra*, with which I will conclude. He says: "It is a well-known physiological law that the *semen* has great connection with the intellect, and we might add the spirituality of man. The abstaining from waste of this important element of being gives power, the real occult power such as is desired. No *yoga* is ever reported successful without the observance of this rule as an essential preliminary."

It only remains to be said that in the many commentaries on *yoga* the purpose and process are veiled in quasi-scientific mythology. The 'power' is said to

creep silently like a serpent from the lowest *chakram* to the highest: that is, from the testes to the brain.

VI. PERSONAL SEXUAL ETHIC

ETHIC in general is derived from facts given in the experience of life whether of individuals or societies or the race. Historically, it has often been formulated by some outstanding personality, and sometimes invested with a divine or semi-divine authority. Moses, the Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Aristotle, Christ, and great moralists and philosophers who in all countries followed them, all proposed, each in their separate day and country, some criterion by which human conduct might be tried. A general ethical system is dependent, then, upon metaphysics, psychology, physiology and sociology, which together supply the facts or supposed facts, which speak for themselves. A personal sexual ethic, therefore, for any age or civilization will be drawn from the data which most impress men in their own experience. This personal sexual ethic, like the social sexual ethic, varies from age to age, but it has some elements of stability in it, which are more or less permanent.

In attempting to formulate a personal sexual ethic for these times, one would draw from all known facts and probabilities, especially when these are confirmed by the experience of reliable observers. I am not assuming too much when I say that the facts adduced in my sections I to V suggest immediately to the mind of a candid and intelligent reader a number of logical and inevitable conclusions. From the point of view of bodily, mental and spiritual welfare, sexual continence would appear to be the irrefutable law deduced from the facts. But immediately another law springs up to challenge it—"the law in our members" as the Christian apostle calls it. We are in the presence of an antinomy—law contradicting law. The older law is that of Nature, whence we have sexual impulse; the newer law is that of intuition, of science, of experience, of conviction,

of ideal. Obedience to the older law tends to decay and premature death (speaking relatively): the path of the newer law is beset with difficulties so great that one hardly listens seriously to its voice. People cannot get themselves to believe this statement of the case. They begin at once to say: But, but, but? It is worthy of remark here that the formulation of the strictest ethic by *yogin*, *bhikkhu* and monk does not, as is so often believed, rest on mythologic fables or superstitions, but on an intuition of the physiological facts described in this essay.

I know of no modern writer who has stated the case for the sexual ethic for the Christian more forcibly or clearly than Leo Tolstoy, the now discredited idealist of what once was Russia. I print it here as an illustration of the old* philosopher's views:

102. The instinct of the continuation of the race—the sexual instinct—is innate in man. In the animal condition he fulfils his destiny by satisfying this instinct, and in so fulfilling it finds welfare.

103. But with the awakening of consciousness, it appears to man that the gratification of this instinct may increase the welfare of his separate being, and he enters into sexual intercourse, not with the object of continuing the race, but to increase his personal welfare. This constitutes the sexual sin. . . .

107. In the first case, when man desires to keep chaste† and to consecrate all his powers to the service of God, sexual sin will consist in any sexual intercourse whatever, even though it have for its object the birth and rearing of children. The purest marriage state will be such an innate sin for the man who has chosen the alternative of chastity.

*The reader should remember that Tolstoy's definition of sin has no theological connotation, sin is defined by him as that which constitutes an obstacle to the manifestation of *love*, which in its turn is defined as universal goodwill

†The words chaste and chastity are used by the author in their Russian *signification* which includes complete abstinence from sexual intercourse

113. The sexual sin, i. e., mistake, for the man who has chosen the service of chastity, consists in this: he might have chosen the highest vocation and used all his powers in service of God, and consequently, for the spread of love and towards the attainment of the highest welfare, instead of which he descends to a lower plane of life and deprives himself of his welfare.

114. The sexual sin or mistake for the man who has chosen to continue the race will consist in the fact that by depriving himself of having children, or, at all events, of family relationships, he deprives himself of the highest welfare of sexual life.

115. In addition to this—as with the gratification of all needs—those who try to increase the pleasure of sexual intercourse diminish the natural pleasure in proportion as they addict themselves to lust.

It will be observed that Tolstoy's doctrine is in ethical relativity; the effective absolute is not fixed for man by God or some authoritative teacher, but is chosen by the individual himself. All that is necessary is that he should conform to the law he has accepted.

Such an ethic offers a series of descending prohibitions. To the man who has a conviction in favour of entire continence, and who intelligently controls himself for higher physical and psychic ends, any form of sexual indulgence is disallowed; to the man who has entered into the bond of marriage, sexuality outside it is forbidden. Further, promiscuous or irregular intercourse of the unmarried would nevertheless exclude such a degrading relation as prostitution, while any person engaging in natural act should shun unnatural vices. Finally, to any class of person indulging at all, over-indulgence would be regarded as an evil, while for the immature and the youthful, indulgence should be postponed. Such is the system of sexual ethic.

I can hardly think that any one can be found incapable of understanding the nature of this general sexual ethic, and there must be very few who would on serious reflection deny its force. There is a tendency, however, to meet such an ethic by sophistry of various

kinds. People suppose that because continence is difficult and undoubtedly rare its advocacy is invalid. Logically they should say the same of fidelity in marriage—which is in some cases difficult—or restricted indulgence within it, or adherence to the natural practice. If they deny one ideal they may deny all and permit us to fall into the lowest vices and inordinate lust. Why not? The only reasonable and logical method is to follow the star above us, the star of the ideal that leads us out of one declension after another and enables us to conquer by the power of one law the power of its antinomy. Thus by the intelligent and volitional practice of this ethic a man may conceivably be raised from the unnatural vices of youth to natural indulgence even if promiscuous; from this he may be drawn to the discipline of married fidelity, and for the sake of himself and his partner, to such restraint as they are able to endure. The same ethic may lead him on to the higher victories of continence, or indeed catch him before he has sunk to the several lower phases of indulgence.

VII. EROS AND AGAPE

THE New Testament has much teaching in reference to 'love', and adopts two conceptions, which must be separately examined. The first is that of *eros*, the passive love of life, of the world, of man and woman, of the manifold sensations and emotions that yield us pleasure. This *eros* is not a matter of our wilful choice; we are attracted here and repelled there; we gravitate to life itself, by forces that seem to be greater than ourselves, and to which we, for the most part, respond by appropriate action. Our likes and dislikes, our loves and hates, our affection and disaffection form one system in *eros*. For what does *eros* ask? For welfare: for the welfare of that separate personality in which the claims are felt most keenly—namely, for 'myself'. And that welfare is pursued with egoistic motive through every life, every generation, every nation, growing in

intensity and remorselessness, until it reaches, as lately,^{*} a state of world war. It passes through innumerable phases, adopts, by the aid of the intellect, all kinds of mechanical and economic devices, and is at the present moment incarnate in the system of modern civilization.

What, then, we may legitimately ask, was the Christian teaching about this *eros*, this love of life? Was it to be despised, neglected, resisted, or stamped out? Or, was it to be given free rein to attain its ends? All the teaching as to *eros* may be summed up in the simple words: "Your Heavenly Father knoweth what thing ye have need of," and "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." *Eros* is not to be destroyed, but transcended; a higher aim is proposed by Christ which, if attempted with success, will lead to a 'more abundant life' in which a purified *eros* has its share.

It is here we meet with the essential Christian Love called in the New Testament *agape*. We are able to understand at once its distinctive quality as compared with *eros*. *Agape*, unlike *eros*, is an act of personal will. It is 'loving-kindness' that overrides attraction and repulsion, and so can be extended to friend and enemy alike. Christian love emphatically is not, therefore, the weak and sentimental emotion it is so often supposed to be, but is, in its very nature, an effort of the will that rises above all emotion. It is not merely will, but *will qualified by goodness*, and the Christian, in exercising such love, accomplishes and facilitates for others the aims of their *eros*; like the Heavenly Father, he also "knows what things men have need of." By means of the faculties of imagination and compassion he is prompted to meet their needs, for as he would that men should do for him so he strives to do for them: for he knows that *eros* in them, as in him, asks for life. The Christian's conception of life, therefore, does not deny the claims of *eros*, but emphasizes the duty of *agape*. Christian ethic is thus a new life direction, a turning round from the way of the world, from

the seeking of private welfare to positive goodwill and universal welfare.

The early Christians were taught, like other people, a 'golden rule,' but even though this were intelligible enough they were taught also something still more lofty and metaphysical: men are to imitate God: as He is perfect in loving-kindness, so also must His servants be: "because God is love"; *hoti ho theos agape estin* (Matt. v., 48; John Ep. I., IV, 8).

VIII. SOCIAL SEXUAL ETHIC

JUST as society is the extension and co-ordination of the activities of individuals, so a social sexual ethic rises out of a personal one. In other words, society requires additions to and qualifications of the personal ethic, and the chief instance of these is the institution of marriage. A great deal has been written upon the history of marriage by learned scientists, and the data collected are immense. Nothing but the bare conclusion need be cited here in order to enable us to refer to modern expedients that are being offered.

Anciently, and arising out of the facts of the human reproduction, the mother was naturally the more important of the two partners. She was, as she still is, the chief agent of nature's process. Within her and around her are the centres of family growth. Consequently matriarchy, or the rule of the mother, was once widely recognized, and polyandry, the practice of associating several males with the central female, was admitted. There are vestiges of this system still in vogue among the primitive tribes of Asia. Out of it, and partly as a consequence of tribal association, the status of the husband was evolved. One of the several men associated with the mother—the strongest and most attractive defender—was raised to a position of preference. Indeed the word 'husband' contains the history of the institution down to early Scandinavian times: He was *husbuondi*, the housedweller, bound, as others were not, to the house. Eventually, the husband became

the master of the house, and one of this class the chief or king of the tribe; and just as under the matriarchy the practice of polyandry appeared, so under male rule the practice of polygamy developed

Psychologically, therefore, if not socially, man is naturally polygamous and woman naturally polyandryous. As a male, the man radiates his desire in many directions always lighting for the time being on the most attractive of the opposite sex. And similarly with the female. But human society, both primitive and modern, could not exist unless some check were placed upon the promiscuous, natural, psychological impulses, which are, in all species and kingdoms below the human, exuberant and prolific. The check invented by Society inevitably was marriage, and eventually monogamous marriage. Its only alternative is promiscuity and the utter disruption, at least, of the present form of Society. We can, of course, see the contest going on before our eyes. Prostitution, irregular and non-legal unions, adulteries and divorces are the day-to-day evidence that monogamous marriage has not established itself in power over the older and more primitive relationships. Will it ever do so?

Meanwhile, notice must be given to an expedient that has long been secretly present with us, but has lately shown its face without shame. It is called 'Birth Control', and consists in the use of chemical and mechanical means for preventing conception. Conception, of course, apart from its burden upon the woman, places a restraint for a considerable time upon the man, especially upon the man of good feeling. Birth control or contraception removes all prudential motives for self-restraint and makes it possible for sexual indulgence in marriage to be limited only by the diminution of desire or the advance of age. Apart from this, however, it inevitably has an influence outside the marriage relation. It opens the door for irregular, promiscuous and unfruitful unions, which from the point of view of modern industry, sociology and politics, are full of dangers. I cannot go into these here.

It is sufficient to say that by contraception, inordinate sexual indulgence both in and out of marriage is facilitated, and, if I am right in my foregoing physiological arguments, evil must come to both individuals and the race.

IX. CONCLUSION

LIKE the seed cast by the sower, this essay will fall into the hands of some who will despise it, of those who from incapacity or sheer idleness will not even understand it. In some of those who for the first time hear of its ideas it will rouse opposition and even anger; but to a few it will appeal as truthful and useful. Yet even they will find doubts and questions rising in their minds. The simplest of them will say to me: "According to your arguments sexual intercourse ought not to take place; the world would then become unpeopled—which is absurd! Therefore you must be wrong." My reply is that I have no such dangerous nostrum to offer. 'Birth Control' is the most potent form of birth prevention and will depopulate the world faster than the attempted practice of continence. My purpose is a simple one: by offering certain philosophic and scientific truths as a challenge to ignorance and indulgence, I desire to help to purify the sexual life of our time.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN WORDS

Ahimsa	Non violence.
Arundhati	wife of Vasistha, a Vedic sage
Asana	.. a seat, a Yoga posture
Ashram, Ashrama	. abode of a spiritual teacher, a period in the life of a Brahman, there being four such periods, viz., Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa
Atma	soul
Bhagavadgita	(see Gita)
Bhagawan	a divine being
Bhagini Samaj	an association of women
Bhajana Mandal	a group of worshippers
Bharatmata	. Mother India
Bhasma	metallic or vegetable ashes used for medicinal purposes
Bhikkhu	a mendicant.
Bhima	. second Pandava prince who was noted for his super-human strength
Bhishma	Grand Old Man of the Mahabharata famed for his righteousness.
Brahma	God
Brahmachari	a male who has taken a vow to lead a celibate life
Brahmacharini	a female who observes celibacy
Brahmacharya	continence, religious studentship
Brahman	a member of the priestly caste among Hindus
Buddha	founder of Buddhism, also known as Gautama, Siddhartha, etc
Chaitanya	Hindu religious teacher of the 15th century A D
Chakram	. a wheel, plexus
Charka	spinning wheel.
Damayanti	wife of Nala, a hero of the Pauranic age

<i>Devadasi</i>	... a female devoted to the service of a temple.
<i>Dharma</i>	... religion; law; prescribed course of conduct.
<i>Dharmaja</i>	legitimate.
<i>Draupadi</i>	. wife of the Pandavas, the heroes of the Mahabharata.
<i>Drona</i>	a hero of the Mahabharata.
<i>Gayatri</i>	the most sacred Vedic prayer.
<i>Gita</i>	a most popular Hindu scriptural work in which Sri Krishna sums up the essence of Hindu religion.
<i>Grihasthashram</i>	period of life led by a Hindu as a householder.
<i>Guru</i>	spiritual teacher.
<i>Hakim</i>	. a physician practising the Unani system of medicine.
<i>Harijan</i>	literally 'people of Hari or God' members of the 'untouchable' class among Hindus.
<i>Hathayoga</i>	a rigorous system of Yoga (see Yoga)
<i>Japa</i>	. muttered prayer.
<i>Jyoti Sangha</i>	a group of social workers.
<i>Kama</i>	lust; Eros
<i>Khaddar, Khadi</i>	. handspun and handwoven cloth.
<i>Kamaja</i>	lust-born.
<i>Koran</i>	most sacred scriptural work of Muslims
<i>Madhuparka</i>	offering made by Hindus to a guest or a bridegroom on his arrival at the door of his host or father of the bride respectively.
<i>Mahabharata</i>	Hindu epic narrating the story of the Great War between the Pandavas and Kauravas.
<i>Mahatma</i>	Great Soul.
<i>Mahavratas</i>	... the great vows.
<i>Mantra</i>	Vedic hymn; a sacred formula or incantation.

<i>Manu</i>	ancient Hindu law-giver.
<i>Mirabai</i>	a Rajput poet-princess who was a great devotee of God Krishna.
<i>Moksha</i>	.. liberation from earthly bondage.
<i>Muhammad</i>	founder of Islam
<i>Niyoga</i>	ancient Hindu custom of younger brothers begetting on elder brother's widow.
<i>Panchamas</i>	untouchables.
<i>Pandavas</i>	heroes of the Mahabharata
<i>Patanjali</i>	expounder of the Hindu system of philosophy known as Yoga
<i>Pativrata</i>	chaste wife.
<i>Pranayama</i>	breathing exercise according to Yogic system.
<i>Prashnopanishad</i>	one of the major Upanishads
<i>Purdah</i>	. veil screening the face of women from sight of strangers.
<i>Rajayoga</i>	an easy mode of Yoga (see Yoga)
<i>Rajayogi</i>	one who follows the Rajayoga.
<i>Rama</i>	hero of the Hindu epic, the Ramayana.
<i>Ramanama</i>	continuous repetition of the divine name "Rama."
<i>Ramdas</i>	Maharashtra saint who lived in the 17th century.
<i>Ramraj</i>	literally "kingdom of Rama," ideal system of government
<i>Rishi</i>	an inspired sage.
<i>Sagotra</i>	of the same kin.
<i>Sahadharmini</i>	a legally married wife.
<i>Sangha</i>	association, group
<i>Sannyasa</i>	abandonment of all worldly ties with a view to fixing the mind on the Supreme Being.
<i>Sannyasi</i>	one who has taken to Sannyasa
<i>Sapinda</i>	having the same funeral cake; blood relation.
<i>Saptapadi</i>	ceremony of the bridegroom and

the bride walking together round the nuptial fire.

Sati

a virtuous wife who immolates herself on the death of her husband.

Satya

Truth.

Satyagraha

recourse to Truth-force or soul-force.

Satyagrahi

one who has recourse to Satyagraha.

Savitri

wife of Satyavan, a Pauranic hero.

Seva

selfless service of others.

Shastri

scriptural text.

Shloka

stanza.

Sita

wife of Rama (*see* Rama).

Smriti

code of ancient Hindu law.

Sutra

an aphorism; a concise rule.

Swadeshi

made in one's own country.

Swamin

master of the house.

Swamini

mistress of the house.

Swaraj

self-government; independence.

Tapas

austerity; penance.

Tulsidas

Poet-saint of Northern India who lived in the 16th century A.D. and who wrote the Hindi work "Ramacharitamanasa," otherwise known as "Tulsi Ramayana" extolling the glories of Rama.

Upanishads

Hindu philosophical treatises composed subsequent to the Vedas.

Vaidya

a physician practising the Ayurvedic system of medicine.

Vanaprasthashram

period of life led by a Hindu as a hermit.

Varna

.. caste; colour.

Vishwamitra

.. a celebrated sage.

Vyabhichara

adultery.

Vyasa ..

a celebrated sage who was the author of the Epic, Mahabharata.

Yākutī	Unani tonic.
Yoga	Hindu system of religious contemplation for effecting union of the human soul with the Supreme Being.
Yogi ...	one who practises Yoga.

ABBREVIATIONS

H.—*Harjan*.

M G's.I.—*Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, by C. F. Andrews.
George Allen & Co, London

S. and W.—*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*.
G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, Fourth Edition

S M.E.T —*The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, by
M K Gandhi, 2 Vols., Navajivan Press,
Ahmedabad.

Y. I.—*Young India*.

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